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Race to the Finish: Political Discourse and the Racialization of Immigration in the 2016
Presidential Election

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

Amy N. Perry

September 2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Race to the Finish: Political Discourse and the Racialization of Immigration in the 2016
Presidential Election

by

Amy N. Perry

Doctor of Philosophy, Sociology
University of California, Riverside, September 2019
Dr. Adalberto Aguirre Jr., Chairperson

This dissertation examines the racialization of immigrants and immigration in US political discourse, using quotes from candidates and their campaigns that were reported in three national newspapers during the 2016 presidential election. Two research questions guide this dissertation: 1) *How did the candidates running for president in the 2016 presidential election extend racial meaning (i.e. engage in the process of racialization) to the topic of immigration?* 2) *What discursive strategies did candidates in the 2016 presidential election employ to give legitimacy to their positions and their statements on immigration?* The racialization of immigrants and immigration in the political discourse was accomplished primarily through linking and conflating all immigration in the United States with Mexican and Latino immigration in particular. Themes *the border* and *crime and criminals* were thematically tied together, often co-occurring, while *crime and criminals* and *family and community* were the primary

theme/counter-theme in the discursive construction of immigrants. The minor themes *values, weakness and strength*, and *common sense, sanity, and intelligence* frequently surfaced in the data as well. This data contributes to the existing literature on race, immigration, and political discourse by illustrating how presidential candidates employed themes and discursive strategies in order to argue for the existence of a particular racialized “problem,” for which their potential election was sold as the “solution.”

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CHAPTER 1: Who Says What and How

If the 2016 U.S. presidential election could be encapsulated within a single sound bite, it would be this: “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best...They’re sending people that have lots of problems...They’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime. They’re [their] rapists.” These words, uttered by Donald Trump in June 2015 as he announced his candidacy for the office of the president of the United States, hit the news media like a shock wave and ensured that everyone, everywhere, would be talking about Donald J. Trump. Trump’s campaign slogan promised to “MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN!”, and of all the social ills highlighted by Trump during his candidacy, there was no drum that he beat more steadily or more insistently than the alleged dangers of undocumented immigration—specifically, undocumented immigration from Mexico. In light of his heavy focus on immigration, his campaign slogan to “make American great again” took on a particular tone and implication: (undocumented) immigration from Mexico is a social and political pandemic, and the United States—once a “great” country—is no longer great, but can be made great again, through mass deportations and the building of a wall along the U.S-Mexico border. Trump successfully tapped into a growing disaffection in the American public toward immigrants, which eventually propelled him into the White House as the 45th president of the United States.

Trump’s fleeting words on the nature and character of Mexican immigrants during his announcement speech purportedly referred only to undocumented immigrants; nonetheless, through accident or intent he elided any differences between types of immigrants and instead referred in a broad sweep to “people [sent by Mexico]”. His

reference to Mexican immigrants as criminals and rapists generated a flurry of media attention. Thereafter, immigration remained a foregrounded topic in the political and media discourse that revolved around the campaign.

It is inaccurate to assert, as Donald Trump did, that Trump *introduced* immigration into the political conversation, but it would be difficult to dispute that his words and his campaign had a significant impact on the political discourse on immigration in the months following his announcement. Following Trump's entry, the 2016 presidential election campaign effectively turned into a game of call and response; Trump would speak, and other candidates on both sides of the political party divide would hasten to support or condemn Trump's rhetoric or his policy proposals. From his characterization of Mexican immigrants as undesirables to his campaign promise to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border that Mexico would pay for, Trump kept the focus of his campaign on the southern border and drummed up concern over a certain kind of immigrant. With the exception of the Syrian refugee crisis and the Paris and San Bernardino terrorist attacks in late 2015, the political conversation on the state of immigration in the United States was and continues to be predominantly fixed on Mexico and Mexican, or at least "Latino," immigrants.

The political discourse surrounding the 2016 presidential election was not altogether unique in the history of U.S. politics. Immigrants and immigration, particularly undocumented immigration, are convenient political targets for bolstering approval ratings, fueling nativist fears, restricting access and funding to assistance programs, and justifying the United States' interventions in foreign countries (see Johnson, Farrell, and

Guinn 1997; Sanchez 1997; Teitelbaum 1984). Nativist sentiment in the American public regarding who “deserves” access to a nation’s resources and job market are partly driven by economic factors, such as the outsourcing of American jobs (Rosenblum and Brick 2011; Sanchez 1997). This pattern of economic instability and immigrant scapegoating—who is targeted and how—is a central feature of conservative political views in the United States.

Some of the prominent presidential candidates in the 2016 presidential campaign had firsthand or secondhand experience with the U.S. immigration system: Bernie Sanders’ parents were Jewish immigrants to the United States; Donald Trump’s current wife Melania is an emigrant from Slovenia; Ted Cruz’s father was born in Cuba, and Cruz himself was born in Canada and held dual citizenship in Canada and the United States until 2014. During the campaign, candidates would relate their experiences with immigration or their relational proximity to immigrants in an effort to legitimize their political positions on immigration.

Immigration plays a central role in the United States’ national narrative, to the point where it is described as a “nation of immigrants.” Mainstream politicians do not typically come out against all immigration; rather, certain immigrant subgroups are targeted as undesirable and problematic. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act (Sharpe 1995) eliminated racial preference in the establishment of national quotas for immigration. This change affected the flow of immigration into the United States. Prior to the law, European immigrants made up the bulk of immigrants coming into the United States; by comparison, in 2013 the majority of immigrants came from either Latin

America or Asian countries (Chishti, Hipsman, and Ball 2015). In the years following the passing of the 1965 law and later the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which provided an opportunity for legalization for qualified unauthorized immigrants while making it illegal for employers to knowingly hire unauthorized immigrants, immigration has been discursively “browned.” The targets of anti-immigrant initiatives in the 20th and 21st centuries have often been groups that are or were categorized as “non-white” in the United States’ racialized caste system. Today, it is largely Mexican or Latino immigrants that have become the target of the American public’s ambivalence toward immigration in general and a fear of undocumented immigrants in particular. The movement of migrants north over the U.S-Mexico border has been likened to a “brown tide” (Santa Ana, Moran, and Sanchez 1998) that will lead to the “browning” of the United States (Miller 1997). It is not the first time the southern border to the United States, and undocumented immigration from Mexico, has been popularized as a national concern, nor is it likely to be the last.

This dissertation examines the political discourse on immigration with the following questions as guidelines. *How did the candidates running for president in the 2016 presidential election extend racial meaning (i.e. engage in the process of racialization) to the topic of immigration?* In brief, the racialization of immigration is an outcome of the close discursive association between immigration in general and immigration from Mexico and Latin America in particular, to the extent that the term “immigrant,” without modifiers, evokes an image of a Latino immigrant. Some researchers, like Barrera (2008), argue that Latinos are not accurately described as a

racial or racialized group, because the traits associated with Latinos and Mexican Americans are not innate and because Mexican Americans have historically been legally classed as white in the United States. Even so, research has demonstrated these groups are subject to *racial profiling* (see Aguirre 2004; Aguirre, Rodriguez, and Simmers 2011), a process that profiles persons by phenotypic and cultural cues in an attempt to identify members of targeted racial groups.

In *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* (1975), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that immigration stops are legitimate contexts for profiling Mexican identity (Aguirre 2004). The fact that there are Latinos who would not be profiled because they do not “look” Latino does not negate the existence of visual, verbal, and auditory cues that are culturally associated with “Latino-ness.” Racial categorization has always been an imperfect social process based on the possession of certain indicators. The racial profiling of Mexicans and Latinos draws on both racial and nativist discourses, and while these discourses are intertwined and draw upon one another, they should not be treated as one and the same (Sanchez 1997). This dissertation examines the images of racialized, particularly Mexican and Latin American, immigrants in political discourse and as such contributes to the larger body of work on racial discourse, but given the prominent roles that *foreignness* and *citizenship* play in this discourse, the findings herein are not wholly interchangeable with other arenas of racial discourse where foreignness and citizenship are not typically foregrounded.

What discursive strategies did candidates in the 2016 presidential election employ to give legitimacy to their positions and their statements on immigration? In this

dissertation I examine how candidates use discursive strategies to position themselves and immigrants in an effort to “sell” their message, by presenting themselves as authorities on immigration, by distancing themselves from the negative implications of their own rhetoric, and/or through the construction of a binary model designed to mark a subset of immigrants as unworthy occupants who deserve any negative consequences that come with hardline immigration policies. Of particular interest is the extent to which this binary model of good and bad immigrants is racialized. The existence of “a nation of immigrants” as an integral part of the mythology of the United States effectively rules out a hardline political stance of closing the borders to everyone and invites charges of hypocrisy. As such, another purpose of this dissertation is to examine how “good” and “bad” migrants are identified in the political rhetoric on immigration “reform.” In the United States, “good” migrants are those who come to the receiving country through legal channels, assimilate, and are willing to learn English; “bad” migrants are those who do not come to the receiving country through legal channels, do not assimilate, and are unwilling to learn English. A similar binary has been observed in the political rhetoric of other countries as well (see Van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). Refugees complicate how legality maps onto this binary, where authorized immigrants are “good” and unauthorized immigrants are “bad,” by allowing for the possibility that in *certain situations* it is understandable (if not permissible) for immigrants to enter the United States through extralegal channels.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

The racial and ethnic stratification system in the United States consists of a collection of overlapping and inconsistent racial groupings that are stratified materially and ideologically. While this racial and ethnic system of stratification was originally organized around a black/white binary, shifts in the demographic landscape—spurred on principally but not exclusively by a growing Latino population—have challenged the continued application of the black/white binary (Bonilla-Silva 2010; Perea 1997). Race and ethnicity overlap and intermingle with other systems, such as class and gender (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Omi and Winant 1986), thus it is the combined or interacting effects that determine access to material rewards (see Bonacich, Alimahomed, and Wilson 2008). Racial groups are neither static nor ahistoric and may be more accurately described as racialized groupings, where *racialization* refers to the process by which a previously non-racial group or social practice is incorporated by the racial system and takes on racial significance (Omi and Winant 1986).

Immigrating to the United States draws immigrants into a process whereby they are made to fit in preexisting racialized groupings or transformed into their own racialized group, the construction of which is neither immediate nor, often, universally recognized. This can be seen in the bumpy road that Mexicans (and later immigrants from Latin America more broadly) have been forced to travel on as social actors and state actors, such as census officials and law enforcement agents, struggle to make them “fit” into the racial system of the United States. Some scholars dispute that Latinos are a fully racialized group (see Barrera 2008). Unlike some other racialized minority groups,

Mexican Americans were legally defined as white (Almaguer 1987), yet this early legal definition contended with a social construction of Mexican Americans as non-white (Gomez 2007).ⁱ This racialization holds even in the presence of structural assimilation (Vasquez 2011; see also Jimenez 2008). Perhaps as a consequence of these divergent social and legal definitions, states and the federal government have struggled to demographically define Mexican Americans and Latinos (see Omi and Winant 1986, 2012; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

In addition, while some scholars argue that Mexican Americans (and Latinos) are not regarded as innately inferior (Barrera 2008), this ignores the broad movement away from biological or scientific racism and toward cultural racism that took place during the twentieth century (see Bobo and Smith 1998). Cultural determinism became increasingly popular in the second quarter of the twentieth century as a means of “explaining” the low status and attainment of the children of Mexican immigrants (Vaca 1970). Researchers argued that Mexican immigrants and their children were “trapped” in an ahistorical and unchanging “traditional culture” (Romano 1973:90). Being born to a Mexican immigrant family was still viewed as deterministic for one’s future prospects and quality of life, and the only way to escape the detrimental effects of this traditional culture was to assimilate by surrendering one’s “Mexicanness.” While cultural racism has supplanted earlier forms of biological racism, phenotypic cues such as skin color indirectly implicate biology. For darker-skinned Mexican Americans and Latinos at least, ethnic identities are inescapably embodied identities (see Vasquez 2011).

As a consequence, immigrants from Mexico and Latin America, along with their descendants, risk being cast as perennial outsiders. Past research has demonstrated an implicit but robust association between being white and being American (Devos and Banaji 2005). The flip side of this association is that people of color risk being seen as un-American, foreign, or alien. This risk varies by racial grouping but also by context; in areas with heavy immigration, skin color may lead to an individual not only being categorized as a racialized other but also as an immigrant (Jimenez 2008). Political rhetoric, then, that purportedly “only” targets immigration (and not the Mexican Americans and Latinos born in the United States) or “only” targets unauthorized immigrants (and not the “good” immigrants who came to the United States through legal channels) implies a high level of rigidity and accuracy in the social sorting of peoples that does not exist when those categories are applied to living bodies. Immigration policies and laws targeting migrant populations reinforce the notion that to be Mexican American or Latino is to be not “fully” American (Telles and Ortiz 2008) and perhaps not even fully “legal” (Aguirre and Simmers 2008). Close rhetorical ties between immigration and criminality facilitate slippage from one to the other (Flores 2003; see also Coutin 2005).

U.S. immigration law, as a body of policies, practices, and institutions designed to moderate and manage migration flows, is ostensibly “colorblind” in that race and racial discrimination are not present in the surface text (Haney Lopez 1996; Johnson 1996). In practice, however, the costs and consequences are unevenly distributed, in large part due to immigration being seen as a “Mexican problem” (Aguirre 2008; see Bonilla-Silva 2010 for more on colorblind racism). Similarly, the discourse surrounding immigration

may be superficially race-neutral through the employment of rhetorical strategies that obfuscate racial linkages (see Flores 2003). Studies have demonstrated that attitudes toward Latinos and Mexican Americans affect attitudes on immigration (Ayers, Hofstetter, Schnakenberg, Kolody 2009). Furthermore, while the United States has a long, storied tradition of hostility toward newly arrived immigrant groups, the racialization of Mexican and Latin American migrants and their descendants adds an extra dimension to this hostility (Sanchez 1997) and implies a range of additional consequences for Latinos regardless of their legal and residence status, from additional screening to deportation.

Rhetoric and policies aimed at a subset of migrants—such as those aimed at unauthorized immigrants—end up affecting children of immigrants and the larger migrant community as well (Johnson 1996). In the 1930s, during the Great Depression and at a time where the U.S. government was placing greater restrictions on unauthorized immigration from Mexico, hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants and their U.S.-born children were “repatriated” to Mexico under pressure from the U.S. government (Hoffman 1974). Although these U.S.-born children were legally U.S. citizens with full rights to remain in the United States, they were swept up in the economic anxieties of a nation and ferried to a foreign land. This massive deportation drive doubtless had a dramatic effect on the U.S. communities the “repatriated” left behind.

Despite significant levels of intragroup difference, Latinos as a whole are the targets of discursive practices that vilify immigrants and immigration. The reasons why immigrants and immigration elicit such strong reactions from the American public are

complex, but much of the literature points to the role of the economy (Johnson et al. 1997). For corporations, Mexican migrants are a convenient source of cheap, exploitable labor (Barrera 1979). During times when the economy flounders, opinions on immigration take a downward turn (Flores 2003; Johnson et al. 1997). Immigrants are portrayed as thieves stealing jobs away from U.S. citizens (Aguirre 2008; Flores 2003). For example, in the years before and during the Great Depression, Mexican migrants were discursively transformed from a docile, ideal workforce to criminals public menaces (Flores 2003). Not incidentally, this shift was accompanied by the 1929 passage of a law that made undocumented entry a felony offense (Flores 2003).

In addition to economic threats, immigrants and immigration are also discursively positioned as threats to sovereignty (Demo 2005). In the years since the end of the Cold War, anti-immigrant discourse has focused the search for enemies inward, to enemies residing within the State (Mehan 1997); in addition to immigrants, the federal government is a target of this discourse for failing to keep Americans safe (Demo 2005). Border imagery and proposals of building a border wall (see Aguirre and Simmers 2008; Demo 2005) mark the United States as a physical sovereign space in need of defense, but it is largely only the southern border with Mexico that is portrayed as needing defending. In part this is due to the perceived threat of Mexican workers to U.S. workers, but the disparity in treatment between the northern and southern borders may also be partly attributed to the perception of Mexican migrants as a cultural and racial threat (see Aguirre and Simmers 2008).

The discourse surrounding birthright citizenship provides a clear example of where the narrative of the federal government as inadequately protectionist intersects with the narrative that Mexican immigrants willfully exploit the law. Presidential candidate Donald Trump targeted birthright citizenship as something that must be “ended” despite it being enshrined in the U.S. constitution. The continued existence of birthright citizenship is presented as a federal failure: Donald Trump’s campaign website quoted Harry Reid as stating that “‘no sane country’ would give automatic citizenship to the children of illegal immigrants” and cited a Rasmussen Reports survey to support the assertion that voters disapprove of birthright citizenship. Birthright citizenship was presented as existing in spite of what is logical (sane), persisting either through inertia or through willful disregard of the will of the voters.

Birthright citizenship exists in the United States and that the act of a Mexican immigrant woman giving birth on U.S. soil is not illegal. Nonetheless, Mexican immigrant mothers have been constructed as criminals and animals in immigration discourse, resulting in the conflicting dual narratives of Mexican immigrant women as livestock (breeders) and Mexican immigrant women as calculating opportunists (see Romero 2011). The act itself is not criminal, therefore their bodies and their assumed motivations are criminalized.

Use of certain words and phrases signal a speaker’s political stance regarding immigration, and the presence of certain phrases should not be treated as incidental or accidental. Restrictionist politicians tend to highlight the illegality and foreignness of the immigrant population(s) being targeted through use of phrases like “illegal alien” (Mehan

1997; Romero 2011). Less restrictionist politicians and perhaps those who wish to emphasize the humanitarian angle opt for terms such as “non-resident workers,” “undocumented workers,” and “unauthorized workers” (Mehan 1997).

Metaphors are a particularly effective way of bundling a range of ideas and communicating them through a single image or set of images. Metaphors are a core part of rhetoric (Ellis and Wright 1998) and play a key role in the construction and translation of the social world (Santa Ana, Moran, and Sanchez 1998), including how we conceive of and view immigration. For example, the melting pot metaphor, regardless of its accuracy in describing a mono-multiculture, has been hugely consequential for how immigration is (or perhaps, more accurately, was) conceptualized (Ellis and Wright 1998). Common metaphors used to target the Mexican or Latino migrant community include immigrants as pollutants (Cisneros 2008), immigrants as animals (Santa Ana, Moran, and Sanchez 1998; Santa Ana 1999; Santa Ana 2002), immigrants as invaders (Santa Ana 2002), and water metaphors that described the movement of migrants as a “flood,” “surge,” or “deluge” (Santa Ana, Moran, and Sanchez 1998). Metaphoric mappings provide pathways for making sense not only of the population or phenomenon in question, but how U.S. citizens relate to that population or phenomenon. Thus, for example, animals are to humans as immigrants are to U.S. citizens (Santa Ana 2002).

Key pieces of legislation that target the United States’ migrant population, such as California Proposition 187, California Proposition 227, and Arizona Senate Bill 1070, create flash fires that facilitate the study of metaphors (Cisneros 2008) and the framing of immigrants in political discourse (Aguirre 2012). Presidential elections similarly create

research opportunities for topics of national interest because candidates are forced to articulate—at times, on the fly—both what various social issues are and what the candidates' positions are vis-à-vis those issues. Immigration law was not the sole focus of the 2016 presidential election; it was one of several topics that received extensive attention in the media and political discourse that surrounded the election. Nonetheless, the prominent focus on immigration and immigration law, particularly in the months following Trump's candidacy announcement, generated a media fire that provided a prime, if not wholly unique, opportunity to study the social construction of immigrants in national political discourse.

Studying the use of metaphors and the characterization of groups is not solely an academic pursuit without real world application; in a democratic society, the way an issue or a group is framed by media and political elites (Shen 2004) impacts the opinions and views of voters. Media and political frames can be likened to picture frames that place boundaries around an image (Hallahan 1999). Like photographers and painters, media and political elites choose what elements of a scene are foregrounded and which are relegated to the background, and by positioning the frame *just so*, certain elements can be excluded altogether. One of the ways in which these elites can shape the image construction of an issue or group is by altering what pieces of information are presented and what concerns are emphasized (Druckman 2001). For example, an anti-immigration politician might foreground the threat of criminality and the loss of jobs, while a pro-immigration politician might stress the positive qualities of immigrant groups and evoke national values when discussing the movement of groups across national borders.

Previous research that has been conducted on framing effects has grappled with establishing the impact of the use of frames on “citizen competence,” (Druckman 2001). While frames are not the sole drivers of public opinion, *how* an issue or group is textually constructed in media or political discourse can exert a push or pull effect on how individuals interpret events or view certain groups, although this effect is mediated by individuals’ frames or schemas (Shen 2004), their predispositions (de Vreese 2005), and prior knowledge and exposure to information (de Vreese 2005).

While research has demonstrated that people are not merely sheep being led from one opinion to the next, it nonetheless stands that at a societal level, the use of frames has the potential to shape public opinion and collective actions (de Vreese 2005). Thus the potential impact of Trump’s words and those of his fellow candidates were at least two-fold. First, the energized response—both positive and negative—to Trump’s foregrounding the immigration debate was and likely will be factored into the actions, including policy initiatives, of incumbent and future politicians as they respond to “the will of the people.” Second, the shape and nature of the political discourse on immigration in the 2016 presidential election will have exerted some level of influence on voters in terms of their views on immigration and immigrant groups. This dissertation simultaneously stands as a testament to where we currently are as a society with regard to how we collectively view immigration and immigrants, and as an indication of where we are headed.

PURPOSE AND OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation augments the research on immigration as a topic of political discourse in the following ways. First, it contributes to the research on themes used to criminalize and dehumanize Mexican and Latino immigrants (chapters three and four). By foregrounding immigration as a central issue, Donald Trump sold this issue to the American public by playing up the alleged threat posed by unauthorized immigrants. While previous research has demonstrated some of the ways that Mexican and Latino immigrants are criminalized and dehumanized (Flores 2003' Santa Ana 2002), these tropes should not be treated as either static or universal, as they mutate over time and across contexts. By making immigration a prominent issue in the presidential election, restrictionist and anti-immigrant policies were justified as necessary for a leadership role over a "nation of immigrants."

Second, this dissertation augments the existing body of research regarding the spatialization of the Mexican/Latino body in political discourse (chapter five). Unauthorized migrants are cast as outsiders (Coutin 2005) or even more damningly as "enemies within" (Mehan 1997). Their conflicting physical presence and legal non-presence consigns unauthorized migrants to "spaces of nonexistence" that are socially constructed but carry material consequences due to the restriction of certain legal rights and protections afforded to legal residents (Coutin 2000; Coutin 2005). Unauthorized immigrantsⁱⁱ are framed through law and discourse as embodying their unauthorized or undocumented status and carrying these outsider spaces wherever they go; the mere presence of unauthorized immigrants is problematized, and dominant solutions to this

problem revolve around exclusion and removal (Coutin 2005). Unauthorized Mexican migrants in particular are framed as essentially carrying the border with them through their physical movement within U.S. territory (Aguirre and Simmers 2008). This dissertation especially explores the issue of spatialization for unauthorized immigrants in the United States in the political discourse that shaped the 2016 presidential election. Also examined is how presidential candidates construct and affirm the framing of (unauthorized) migrants as outsiders within, and this dissertation explores how this framing makes sense of candidates' political positions. For example, spatialization and the embodiment of the border may help make sense of the political opposition to birthright citizenship. If an (unauthorized) immigrant woman embodies an outsider space or foreign territory, then likely this outsider status carries over to her womb and any child that may occupy it. The womb itself is thus foreign soil, and the woman is guilty of "smuggling" a "foreign" child across the border that she carries with her.

Finally, this dissertation extends research on the racialization of immigration law (chapter four). Previous studies have utilized state-level laws (CA Proposition 187, CA Proposition 227, Arizona SB 1070) as springboards to analyze the ways in which these laws are racially coded and disproportionately affect people of color (see Johnson 1996; Mehan 1997; Sanchez 1997; Santa Ana 1999; Cisneros 2008; Aguirre 2012). Lawmakers and supporters of these laws obfuscate the boundaries between legal and illegal immigration, and between immigrants in general with Mexican/Latino immigrants in particular (see Aguirre 2008; Aguirre and Simmers 2008; Aguirre 2012; Johnson 1996). While state-level politics can and do attract national attention, the range and impact of the

discourse surrounding these laws potentially has a shorter range and media cycle than a sustained national campaign like a presidential election.

A note on terminology

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to define several terms. For this dissertation, *discourse* is defined as the structures and practices that are employed in the construction of meaning (Laffey and Weldes 2004). Discourses do not merely reflect the social world; they also produce subjects and subject relations (Laffey and Weldes 2004). The scope and range of political discourse varies depending on how broadly or narrowly one defines politics (van Dijk 1997). For this dissertation, I approach political discourse with a definition of politics that is fairly broad and treats voters and non-political institutions as potential contributors to political discourse (see van Dijk 1997). However, this dissertation only proposes to examine political discourse as it is produced and reaffirmed by a tiny subset of “elites” (see van Dijk 1993): politicians running for the office of President of the United States. I define a *politician* as anyone who has run for, or held, political office at the city, county, state, or national level. For example, by this definition, Trump is a politician by virtue of being a political candidate, despite public perception to the contrary.ⁱⁱⁱ Not all politicians contribute to political discourse equally, nor do the words and policy positions of the vast majority of politicians receive attention from the national news media.

Delimiting the research design in this way effectively locks out an significant chunk of the political discourse on immigration, much of which takes place at the state and local level. However, the purpose of this dissertation is to examine and map the

structures and practices at play on the national stage. Defining the boundaries of discourse for the purpose of study is always a challenge in discourse analysis (Crawford 2004). Because this dissertation looks at a narrow slice of contemporary political discourse, it should not be taken as reflecting or representing all U.S. political discourse across contexts and at various levels (national, state, local).

This dissertation examines a sampling of the broader contemporary political discourse in the United States by focusing on the contributions to that broader discourse of the campaigns and candidates in the 2016 presidential election, principally as mediated by three notable newspapers whose print versions are nationally distributed, although the articles included in the analysis were pulled directly from each newspaper's respective website. Many, but not all, of the articles were released in both print and digital formats. Using discursive analysis,^{iv} I analyze the ways that presidential candidates contribute to and draw from the political discourse on immigration. In chapter two, I outline the theoretical and methodological orientations that undergird this dissertation. Additionally, chapter two describes the empirical methods that I employed and discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the data used in this dissertation.

In chapter three, I discuss the major themes uncovered from the discourse analysis. Three themes were particularly prominent in the political discourse on immigration that surrounded the 2016 presidential election: *the border*, *crime and criminals*, and *family and community*. Themes *the border* and *crime and criminals* were thematically tied together, often co-occurring, while *crime and criminals* and *family and community* were the primary theme/counter-theme in the discursive construction of

immigrants. The minor themes *values*, *weakness and strength*, and *common sense, sanity, and intelligence* frequently surfaced in the data as well, and acted as argumentative appeals to the audience. Also in chapter three, I discuss three discursive strategies employed by candidates: personalizing, distancing, and the construction of a good/bad migrant binary.

In chapter four, I extend the discussion in chapter three by examining how candidates *racialized* immigrants and immigration. This racialization was accomplished primarily through linking and conflating all immigration in the United States with Mexican and Latino immigration in particular. When candidates made references to “the border,” for example, they were referring almost exclusively to the U.S.-Mexico border. Similarly, when candidates discussed undocumented or “illegal” immigrants, context revealed they typically referring to unauthorized Mexican and Latino immigrants. By eliding the differences between authorized and unauthorized Mexican and Latino immigrants, as well as Mexican and Latino immigrants with Mexican and Latino U.S. natives, candidates further strengthened the discursive association between Mexicans and Latinos, immigration, and unauthorized immigration. I also discuss the assumptions imbedded in how candidates talked about the three racialized groups that were present in the data: Mexicans and Latinos; Muslims; and Asian foreign nationals.

Concluding in chapter five, I will situate the findings from the previous chapters in the broader political-historical context. The U.S.-Mexico border and Mexican immigrants were largely the focus of the 2016 presidential election, but the discursive tools employed by presidential candidates to justify their prospective policies and

characterize (Mexican) immigrants in a particular way were not novel 2015-2016 creations, and many of them had been employed (with modifications) to earlier spotlighted immigrant groups. Additionally, in this chapter I explore some of the potential implications and consequences of the narratives and frames employed in the 2016 election and in politics more broadly.

Donald Trump did not invent immigration as a national or political concern, nor was the 2016 presidential election the first time that immigration law was thrust to the foreground of the nation's consciousness. And yet, the astonishing success and popularity that Trump has enjoyed, securing the Republican nomination and eventually winning the 2016 presidential election, has defied the expectations and predictions of political pundits. His popularity amongst voters bloomed and stabilized in spite of (or because of) his bald "truths" and refusal to coach his messages in dog whistle signifiers. Voters responded, and many who spoke to and were quoted in the media indicated that they supported Trump because of his bluntness. "He says what he means," a woman stated at a panel hosted by CNN's Aliysn Camerota. "He says it like it is, he speaks the truth," asserted another woman at a focus group conducted by Purple Strategies, "when he talks about, especially, immigration control and the border, he really...he doesn't care what people think." Another man in the same focus group put it this way: "Most of the politicians talk in let's say 'pastel colors,' they talk for two hours and you go away saying 'what did they say of substance?' Probably nothing. But they haven't offended anybody and tried to make everybody their friend."

Donald Trump's stances were not wholly unique; what is different about Donald Trump, and what voters appear to like about Trump, is that he bowls without bumpers. Even so, he did not create the lanes, nor did he set up the pins. Or, to use another metaphor, Trump harvested the crops, but the seeds were planted by other politicians past and present. The Republican party's early resistance to a Trump candidacy may have at least partly been a reaction to Trump's greed in the harvest; prior to Trump, there was, perhaps, a gentleman's agreement that one could take a few of the crops and use them to "buy" a bump in popular appeal, but one should never take too much, and certainly one should only harvest with an eye toward sustainability and future harvests. If so, then Trump blatantly disregarded that agreement and, in his disregard of the "pastel colors" favored by other politicians, harvested the entire crop in a way that left the farmland barren and perhaps inhospitable to future crops.

All of the above is not intended to paint the Republican party as uniformly anti-immigration or racist. Donald Trump does not represent the Republican party as a whole, and many prominent members of the party (such as Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan) initially resisted endorsing Trump's Republican candidacy. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the political discourse on immigration that prominent candidates in the 2016 presidential election drew on and contributed to as they vied for their party's nomination and, ultimately, the presidency. This dissertation is not a case study into the short (at the time of this writing) political life of Donald Trump. While Donald Trump enjoyed a great deal of publicity and media focus due to some of his more sensational statements, he was not alone in speaking about the perils of

immigration (or, across the aisle, of the perils faced by immigrants). Where he went, others followed, if they had not been there before. This dissertation examines a contemporary example of how politicians utilize the political discourse on immigration in their bid for popularity and prominence. Its focus is on the rhetorical devices that presidential hopefuls (both Republican and Democratic) utilize to flag Mexican and Latino immigrants as a growing group to be feared or exploited for votes.

What is of principle concern is how candidates used immigration law and immigrants (as a voting bloc or bogey man) to appeal to voters. Latinos in the United States are an ever-growing demographic, and while this demographic contains a great deal of intragroup difference, they are often treated in contemporary discourse as a discrete and identifiable group. As the eventual winner of the 2016 presidential election, Trump's rhetoric is of particular importance because it provides a rough roadmap of what can be expected of Trump and his administration with respect to immigration. The U.S. presidency is not a dictatorship, and there are checks and balances in place designed to keep the president from making unilateral moves. For example, Trump's attempts to enact a "Muslim ban" have been met with federal court challenges that have at least slowed his efforts, even if they have not halted them altogether (see chapter five).

Among some segments of the U.S. population there is some level of handwringing over the nation's demographic shifts, and by examining how politicians take advantage of the nation's anxieties in a national election, we can get a sense as to where we, as a nation, are headed, as well as a better understanding of where we currently are. The problem with talking in pastel colors is that it is often difficult to

distinguish colors from one another: what looks pink may in fact really be a muted purple. By foregrounding immigration and discarding “conventional” political speech, Trump’s candidacy has provided a relatively unique opportunity to examine the effects of such naked “truths” on a national election. If politicians tend to talk in pastel colors then perhaps Trump is a color wheel, and as he acts in that capacity, suddenly it becomes easier to see how pink and purple are both shades of magenta.

CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I summarize the theoretical framework that guides this dissertation. I will begin with a brief discussion of the history of racial inequality in the United States. I then develop the argument that Mexican Americans, and, by extension, Latinos, qualify as a separate racialized group in the United States despite being referred to, both colloquially and in the scholarly literature, as an “ethnic group.” I will discuss how the concept of racialization applies not only to groupings of people but also to social practices; specifically, I will discuss how U.S. law, specifically immigration law, is racialized.

I will also outline the methodology I use in this dissertation by providing an explanation of what discourse analysis is and what a discourse analysis of the 2016 presidential election contributes to our understanding of how racial inequality in the United States is maintained and perpetuated. Finally, I will provide a detailed explanation of the methods used to gather the data that are used in the analysis, as well as a description and justification of the data sources. I will close the chapter by providing an overview of how the data were analyzed for this dissertation.

RACIAL FORMATION AND THE COMPLEXITY OF RACIAL INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES

Over the course of the twentieth century, the study of racial inequality in sociology was marked by a shifting set of dominant racial theories. Some of the key ideas that characterized different paradigms include approaching “race relations” as a series of stages, or a cycle, that moved from competition to conflict to accommodation and finally

to assimilation (Park 2000); viewing racial/ethnic groups through the lens of internal colonialism (see Barrera 1979; Barrera, Munoz, and Ornelas 1972; Blauner 1972); and elevating class as the “true” source of racial inequality (see Wilson 1978; Wilson 1987). By and large, these theoretical approaches, designed to make sense of, explain, and perhaps even ultimately reduce racial inequalities, did not adequately attend to the ways in which groups of people come to be seen as embodying a separate racial category. Instead, racial groupings were treated as self-evident and static. This assumption, or theoretical oversight, is highly problematic when one considers that racial categories are not stable, coherent, and mutually exclusive, but rather shift over time and merge or separate in response to certain social pressures and processes. The case of Latinos and Mexican Americans, discussed in greater detail below, stands as an example of the instability of the racial system; Latinos and Mexican Americans have held and continue to occupy a nebulous racialized position in the United States. A true understanding of racial inequality in the United States necessitates understanding how racial groupings are initially formed and how the separation of human bodies in all their infinite diversity into discrete categories is maintained and enacted both individually and institutionally. Before an individual can experience material inequalities that can be attributed to their group membership, or perceived group membership, there must be a group to which they belong or are seen as belonging to.

While slow to catch on in sociology (Omi and Winant 2012), Omi and Winant’s *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986) would eventually become highly influential, and the concepts of racialization, racial formation, and racial projects offered

a new lens through which scholars could approach the study of race and race relations, by drawing attention to the formulation and extension of ‘racial logic’ and the relationship between such formulations and extensions and relevant political epochs. *Racialization* refers to the extension of “racial meaning” to a particular group, practice, or relationship (Omi and Winant 1986:64), a process rooted in both ideology and history (Bonilla-Silva 2001). Racial projects are attempts to (re)organize resources along racial lines and to “make sense” of racial logics and racial dynamics (Omi and Winant 2002); racial formation is the interplay of racial projects on a society level, and culminates in the creation, destruction, and alteration of racial categories (Omi and Winant 2002). Thus, for example, the changing nature of available categories in the U.S. census is not the result of happenstance; instead, the use of a particular set of categories for a given version of the census can be traced back to the racial projects in play at the time. Cracks in the racial system, which arguably operates within a black-white binary, are revealed in the shifting treatment of certain racialized groups and how they are “officially” categorized by the U.S. government in government forms and surveys. This can, perhaps, best be seen in the struggle to racially categorize Mexican Americans and Latinos (see Almaguer 2012; Omi and Winant 1986).

Like Critical Race Theory, racial formation theory argues that racism, not equality, is fundamental to the system of race in the United States (Omi and Winant 1986). Thus, racial inequality is feature of the system rather than an aberration. Like internal colonialism (see Blauner 1972), racial formation places race at the center of U.S. society (Omi and Winant 1986) and argues against the conceptualization of race as derivative of

classed, nationed, or ethnicized processes (Omi and Winant 2008). As such, racial formation theory rejects economic class reductionism, along with the Marxist conceptualization of race as “false consciousness” that enables capitalists to divide and exploit the working class (Omi and Winant 2012). Instead, racial formation theory argues that racial dynamics themselves potentially operate as partial determinants of class stratification (Omi and Winant 1986). Omi and Winant (2012) identify Du Bois’ *double consciousness* and Blauner’s *internal colonial model* as critical insights that inspired their racial formation theory. However, unlike Blauner, Omi and Winant (1986) are rather restrained in their use of colonialism, referring to it as a form of oppression that targeted Mexican-origin persons in the United States, but positioning this form of oppression as “unique” and qualitatively different from the forms of oppression faced by blacks (slavery), American Indians (genocide), and Asians (exclusion). Later studies have utilized racialization to problematize the straight-line and seemingly inevitable trajectory of assimilation in earlier assimilation theory, by revealing how racialization can slow or obstruct assimilation (Telles and Ortiz 2008) and how, despite structural assimilation, Chicanos’ relationship with Chicano culture and the potential for cultural assimilation into Anglo society are mediated by racialization (Vasquez 2011).

Racial formation is not without its shortcomings or detractors. It has been criticized both for its political determinism (Omi and Winant 2012) and its emphasis on ideology (Bonilla-Silva 2001). Additionally, Omi and Winant’s conceptualization of a “racial state” does not adequately attend to the patriarchal and capitalistic nature of the state (Bonilla-Silva 2001); while Omi and Winant (1986) position race as “co-determinate”

with class and gender, racial formation gives little to no attention to the interlocked nature of these systems (for more on interlocked and intersecting systems, see Acker 2006; Choo and Ferree 2010; Collins 2000; Crenshaw 1993; Glenn 1999). For example, the discursive construction of the “welfare queen,” which targeted and pathologized black womanhood, demonstrates how racial projects can be gendered (see Reese 2011). While this dissertation relies heavily on racial formation, I have endeavored to be sensitive to the role of gender and class during my analyses of the candidates and their campaigns’ contributions to the political discourse on immigration.

Race as a socially meaningful concept has a history that extends beyond the United States’ borders and backward in time before the existence of the United States. While this might go without saying, social researchers who use race as a “variable” or a social category worthy of study frequently fail to contextualize it and fail to attend to its historical, changing nature (see Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). Far from being a relevant concept to all human societies, it is thought that “race” began to take on a significance and meaning that is similar to its definition in contemporary society in late Middle Ages (Winant 2000) and has been attributed to European colonization (James 2008).

Historically, the racial system in the United States was principally characterized by a black/white binary. The extent to which this still holds true is up for debate and social researchers have proposed alternate schemes, such as white/non-white or black/non-black (Guenther, Pendaz, and Makene 2011). This is not to suggest that there are two and only two racialized groupings; rather, these binary categories (be it black/white, white/non-white, or black/non-black) mark the core dividing line within the racial system. The space

between these two categories can be thought of as a gradient along which other racialized groups are positioned. New groups that enter the United States are subject to an initial classification along this gradient; groups categorized as black or “non-white” may fight this classification and may, to some extent, succeed in distinguishing themselves from blackness or non-whiteness. Immigrants from East Africa who have been categorized as “black,” for example, may attempt to distinguish themselves through social distancing (Guenther, Pendaz, and Makene 2011). The social negotiation of group position demonstrates the shifting, unstable nature of the racial classification system in the United States.

Over the course of the twentieth century the United States experienced a dramatic shift in racial ideology. The “Jim Crow” racism that characterized the early to mid-twentieth century was later replaced by an ideology that could be characterized as “color-blind racism” (Bonilla-Silva 2010). The “post-racial” discourse that followed the election of Barack Obama to the U.S. Presidency in 2008 is a manifestation of such “colorblindness” (Omi and Winant 2012; see also De Genova 2012). Four key frames can be said to operate within color-blind racism: abstract liberalism, naturalization, cultural racism, and minimization of racism. These frames function as pathways for interpreting information that allow the interpreter to “explain away” racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2010). In this supposedly post-racial society, racial equality has been achieved, acts of racism are little more than irrational individual manifestations, and the prevailing sentiment is that individuals should be viewed and treated as “just people” (see also: “I don’t see color”). The problem with colorblindness is that it operates as little more than

an opaque veneer that obfuscates, but does not remedy, institutional racism and racial inequality. Colorblindness serves the status quo and supports the current racial order.

This dissertation relies heavily on the argument that Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans (and, by close discursive association, Latinos) are a racialized group in the United States. This argument is not without controversy and it is not universally accepted. I will briefly attend to this argument here and expand upon it in later chapters. For the rest of this section I will refer to “Mexican Americans” for the sake of brevity, but it should be understood that this argument applies to individuals who were born in the United States and those who were born outside the United States but immigrated to the United States.

There appear to be two primary arguments against conceptualizing Mexican Americans as a racialized group. First is the fact that Mexicans were, early on, legally classified as white (Almaguer 1987). Second is the argument that Mexican Americans are more accurately conceived of as an ethnic or ethnicized group. To the first argument that Mexicans were initially classified as white, I posit that this classification stands in contrast to the lived experience of many Mexican Americans. Despite the presence of formal, legal equality, Mexican Americans have historically experienced full or partial exclusion from dominant institutions (political, economic, and educational) (Mirande 1978). While this exclusion may have resulted from informal policies and practices, it nonetheless prevented Mexican Americans from participating as full U.S. citizens with all the rights and protections that are bundled with citizenship. Additionally, the early legal construction of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as white competed with the

social construction of these groups as non-white (Gomez 2007). Mexican Americans are subject to racial profiling (see Aguirre 2004), particularly by border patrol officers, ICE agents, and local police forces.

The alternative dominant schema for understanding and interpreting the position of Mexican Americans in the United States is to view them as an ethnic group. In discussing Latinos more broadly, Barrera (2008) argues that Latinos are not accurately considered a racialized minority group and instead should be described as a “panethnic group,” of which Mexican Americans are members (in addition to being members of a discrete ethnic group characterized by their ties to Mexico). His argument rests on the assertion that racial discourses are only racial to the extent that they refer to hierarchically ordered groups that are organized on the basis of the supposedly innate qualities of group members. This reliance on innate or inherent qualities does not take into account the ways in which racism in twentieth century U.S. society saw a shift away from biological and scientific racism and a shift toward “cultural” racism (see Bobo and Smith 1998).

“Latinos,” an extremely broad category, may *not* be accurately considered a racialized group due to vast intergroup differences. As a group, Latinos share only one thing in common: an identified or suspected link to the region of the world labeled as “Latin America.” Nonetheless, in the United States, Mexican Americans (as an abstracted group) are associated with a particular skin color, language, and culture. Some combination of skin color, appearance, language, cultural practices, and surname is sufficient to signify perceived group membership, although the processes of categorization doubtless vary by context. While not all of these traits are biologically

heritable, they are nonetheless seen as an inherent part of being “Mexican American” even if they are not *exclusively* found amongst Mexican Americans; the same lack of exclusivity could be said of any other racialized grouping. The racialization of Mexican Americans potentially “spills over” to other Latinos (Massey 2009) on the basis of some of these shared traits. Additionally, the tight discursive association between these two groups means that the terms “Mexican American” and “Latino” are often used interchangeably, which further blends these groups together and increases the likelihood that Latinos will be talked about as if they are a discrete racial group.

Part of the difficulty with determining whether “Mexican Americans” qualifies as a race or ethnicity is that race and ethnicity are so tightly bound up with one another both in academia and in popular discourse that any attempts to disentangle the two are arguably futile. As academics or laypersons, we talk about race and ethnicity as if they were wholly separable, but we are less clear on how they are separate, and the demarcation between the two is not consistent across all racial-ethnic groupings. Race, ethnicity, and nationality all play a role in the U.S. racial system, and the roles each plays should not be assumed to be the same across all groups. Strong arguments against Mexican Americans and Latinos as a racialized group assume that the dominant racial ideology in the United States is more coherent than it actually is. The shifting ways in which survey researchers and U.S. census takers have attempted to capture “Hispanic” descent or group membership stands as evidence to this point: Hispanic descent and race are (almost always) presented as either the same item or as tandem items. If Hispanic

descent is not itself a “race,” it nonetheless functions on the same discursive plane as race and is assigned equal or equitable importance.

Race is both something that individuals are seen to possess and an abstract system that utilizes prototypes. Thus, part of the problem is that arguments concerning racialized persons (whether an individual would be categorized as one group or another) get conflated with arguments concerning racialized groups. The former is subject to individual-level variations, while the latter relies on abstractions of what a group “is” or how a group member “looks”: the “prototypical” characteristics of Mexican Americans are not manifest in every single group member. To that end, I argue that *in reference to specific individuals*, race and ethnicity may be attributed separately, but at the level of contemporary public discourse, when the categories “Hispanic,” “Mexican,” and “Latino” are evoked by politicians and the news media, they are not typically coupled with racial qualifiers and thus function “as” (or in an equivalent sense to) race.

Racialization is a concept that is most often applied to groups of people; it is not uncommon these days to see social researchers use the term “racialized group” in place of “racial group.” However, Omi and Winant (1986) did not limit racialization to groups; racial meaning can also be extended to social practices, such as those that make up the U.S. legal system. Social researchers examining U.S. laws typically do so from one of two angles: text or implementation. Each “side” of a law cannot operate without its sibling. An act’s legality is determined in reference to a formalized piece of text. On the flip side, a law that is textually present but unenforced and unreferenced lacks an impact in virtually every sense other than its potential to be enforced. Both sides are embedded

within overlapping discourses composed political speech, court opinions, public opinion, and the public views and stances of key law enforcement officials and law enforcement organizations. The formal text of written law also contributes substantially to legal discourse.

The U.S. legal system is treated as if it were race-neutral in structure and impact, applying to all citizens equally. Yet even if it were true that all U.S. citizens are treated equally, the very notion of citizenship itself has historically been bound up in the interlocked concepts of race and national origin (see Haney Lopez 2006), meaning that the privileges and protections that come with U.S. citizenship were not doled out equitably across racial-ethnic lines. With regard to immigration law in particular, race and nation were used to exclude different groups of people from entering the country in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Haney Lopez 2006). While citizenship ostensibly stands as a barrier between an individual and deportation from a country in which they reside as a citizen (barring certain circumstances), U.S. history has demonstrated that deportation processes and programs aimed at “non-citizens” are imperfect at best and end up culling citizens and non-citizens from the country’s borders. For example, the “repatriation” program that occurred during the Great Depression and unofficially targeted individuals of Mexican descent deported approximately half a million people to Mexico. Of those, over half were U.S. Citizens (Haney Lopez 2006).

In addition to the threat of deportation by federal authorities, Mexican Americans are targeted by state and local laws and policies aimed at or in response to the perceived threat of unauthorized (Mexican) immigrants. Initiatives such as Arizona’s SB1070,

although later largely struck down by the courts, would have transformed police officers into de facto border patrol agents (Aguirre 2012). SB1070 served as a catalyst for similar legislation and ballot initiatives in other parts of the United States aimed at restricting unauthorized immigrants' access to health care, adult education, and the state's court system (Aguirre 2012). In addition to the human cost to unauthorized immigrants, this type of legislation puts Mexican Americans on the defensive as well, subjecting them to additional scrutiny whenever they attempt to access services that are owed to them by virtue of their citizenship status.

Laws concerning unauthorized immigrants superficially target individuals based on their immigration status (regardless of their race, ethnicity, or national origin), yet because citizenship or legal residence carries with it no visual markers, racial and ethnic categorization—in addition to contextual factors—functions as a proxy signal. While the association between being American and being white (see Devos and Banaji 2005) could, in theory, problematize the presence of all groups of people that have been racialized as “non-white,” public discourse links immigrant status to those of Mexican descent in particular (see Aguirre 2008). This is not to suggest that *only* Mexicans and Mexican Americans are at risk of having their presence or citizenship challenged, but due to the discursive linkage between “immigrant” and “Mexican” in the United States, “looking Mexican” is sufficient grounds for being racially profiled, at least in some contexts (see Hernandez 2009; Johnson 2012). While racial profiling by immigration enforcers may seem antithetical to U.S. values, the U.S. Supreme Court legitimized the use of racial

profiling against persons of “Mexican appearance” with its decision in *United States v. Brignoni-Ponce* (Hernandez 2009).

Immigration can be thought to be *racialized* to the extent that it has become tied up with and implicitly associated with a particular racialized group (in this case, Mexican immigrants). When politicians talk abstractly about “immigration” and its “problems” or its “dangers,” they do so with reference to an explicit or implicit subject. This dissertation employs racial formation theory to make sense of the discursive construction of immigrants by these political elites. As Omi and Winant (2012) argue, identifying race as a social concept “marks the beginning, not the conclusion, of ‘doing’ racial theory” (p. 304), and this dissertation contributes to the body of literature that examines how not just groups, but social processes as well can become racialized. The aims of this dissertation will be accomplished by using discourse analysis, discussed in the next section. Some scholars, such as Bonilla-Silva (1996), have expressed concern at what they view as an over-emphasis on ideological processes in racial formation, and would doubtless express the same concern about the analyses conducted here. This dissertation is not intended to disregard these concerns. By using discourse analysis, I do not mean to suggest that racial inequality is located solely within language or ideology (see van Dijk 1993b). The most obvious, and perhaps most significant, way that politicians enact or contribute to a system of racial inequality is through the policies or pieces of legislation that they support. However, they also, by virtue of their position and with the assistance of the media, shape political discourse and public opinion (van Dijk 1997). How politicians “talk about” immigration normalizes a certain way of viewing immigrants and immigrations.

Particularly for voters who have limited personal experience with immigration and immigrants, the discursive construction of immigrants by political elites can be highly impactful, and politicians can use this influence to mobilize voters and push through anti-immigrant legislation. Thus, these analyses should be framed as a contribution to the myriad ways in which racial inequality manifests and is maintained, not a reduction of those same processes.

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON IMMIGRATION

This dissertation employs discourse analysis to analyze a sampling of the broader contemporary political discourse in the United States and focuses on the contributions to that broader discourse of the campaigns and candidates for the 2016 U.S. presidential election, principally as mediated by the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and the Wall Street Journal. In the next section, I will provide a justification for these and other supplementary sources of data, and I will discuss in greater detail how the data were gathered for this dissertation. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of discourse analysis and distinguish it from other types of textual analyses (principally, content analysis). The work of van Dijk (1993a; 1993b; 1997a; 1997b) and Laffey and Weldes (2004) both play a key role in informing the analyses that were conducted for this dissertation.

Discourse can be defined as both structures and practices that are employed in the construction of meaning (Laffey and Weldes 2004). This dissertation takes the stance that language is *constitutive* (Mehan 1997; see also Foucault 2002); that is, discourses do not merely reflect the social world; they also produce subjects and subject relations (Laffey

and Weldes 2004) and can be conceptualized as a form of verbal interaction (Van Dijk 1997a), thus making them fertile ground for sociological research. A key question that arises from this conceptualization of discourse and its role within the social world is “how does a given discourse contribute to the creation and maintenance of subjects and lay the groundwork for certain patterns of relation between subjects?” Of concern for this dissertation is how a subset of political elites running for U.S. President construct and position immigrants vis-a-vis citizens and how these politicians (and their campaigns) extend the racialization of Mexican-origin people to abstract policy discussions that purportedly pertain to *all* immigrants and immigration law. This is done either overtly, through explicit reference to Mexico and Mexican immigration, or covertly, through the use of the implied subject, and by evoking common discursive elements used to target Mexican immigrants and Mexican-origin persons.

The scope and range of political discourse varies depending on how broadly or narrowly one defines politics (van Dijk 1997a). For this dissertation, I approach political discourse with a definition of politics that is fairly broad and treats voters and non-political institutions as potential contributors to political discourse (see van Dijk 1997a); however this dissertation only proposes to examine political discourse as it is produced and reaffirmed by a tiny subset of “elites” (see van Dijk 1993). Delimiting the research design in this way effectively locks out an extensive chunk of the political discourse on immigration, much of which takes place at the state and local level, but the purpose of this dissertation is to examine and map the structures and practices at play on the national stage. Defining the boundaries of discourse for the purpose of study is always a challenge

in discourse analysis (Crawford 2004); while this study looks at a narrow slice of political discourse, it should not be taken as reflecting and representing all U.S. political discourse across contexts and at various levels (national, state, local).

I characterize the data used in this dissertation as positioned within the *political discourse on immigration* rather than *immigration discourse* because the role of politics is of primary importance. When the presidential candidates and their campaigns talked about immigration, they talked about what they *would do* or what *has been done* (by them or others), in an effort to convince voters to vote for them. Immigration discourse covers a broader swath of text and talk beyond political machinations, and includes law enforcement and border patrol organizations, advocacy and activist groups, and politicians who are using their current positions and power in a way that materially affects immigrants in the present (rather than some speculative future). Because the goal of a campaign is to get elected, the statements and policy positions of candidates are, above anything else, linked to that goal. That is, the purpose of a candidate's proposed policy is to *win voters*, not to enact change—that comes later, and hinges upon their election and any “evolutions” in their policy stance. Because of this, these data are more accurately thought of as positioned within political discourse rather than immigration discourse, although the two discourses intersect in this particular case. This intersection is common for political discourse, which often draws on topics from other discursive areas (van Dijk 1997a).

This dissertation will use discourse analysis to examine how immigrants and immigration are racialized in political discourse. Discourse analysis involves examining

text and speech to uncover discursive structures (Laffey and Weldes 2004). Although discourse analysis and content analysis both deal with “texts” (verbal or written), they should not be treated as analogous. Discourse analyses differ from content analyses in two key areas. First, while quantitative content analysis is principally concerned with surface-level text, discourse analysis examines texts for their implied or implicit messages (Riggins 1997). Second, discourse analysis emphasizes the role of context in shaping and giving meaning to text (Van Dijk 1997a). This is particularly essential for any study that purports to attend to systems of race and racial inequality because any discussion of race must be located within a particular socio-historical context (Omi and Winant 2002).

Discourse analysis focuses on properties of text versus reader interpretation, which can be viewed as a weakness of discourse analysis (Riggins 1997). However, it is not my intention in this dissertation to assert that the findings herein perfectly match the individual interpretations of voters who are on the receiving end of the candidates’ messages. As discussed previously, I take the theoretical stance in this dissertation that language is constitutive (Mehan 1997) and, relatedly, that language is not neutral and has the capacity to influence or constrain reader interpretations (Fairclough 1995). Racial ideologies possessed or disseminated via elite discourse exert an influence on the populace (Van Dijk 1997a:32); they lay the groundwork for certain ways of thinking, particularly about groups or aspects of society that one does not have personal experience with (see Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010). By examining how the presidential candidates racialized immigrants and immigration, the analyses conducted for this

dissertation provide an important, but partial, understanding of categorical positioning of Mexican-origin (and Latino) persons in the United States' system of racial or racialized inequality.

Examples of what elements of text were analyzed include general topics and themes (see Van Dijk 1997a), discursive strategies (ex: linkages, distancing) (see van Dijk 1993b; Bonilla-Silva 2010), rhetorical devices (ex: metaphors) (see Gill and Whedbee 1997), and the construction of subject positions and how they relate to one another. Of particular relevance, given the nature of the study and the principle sources of data (presidential campaigns that were trying to project a particular image of their respective candidates), are the semantic moves that create space between a candidate and a “questionable” or publicly divisive ideology while still getting their message across (see van Dijk 1993b). At their most simplistic, these moves manifest as a simple distancing strategy whereby a candidate disclaims a particular identity or label and then proceeds to deliver a message that would otherwise be viewed as consistent with that identity or label (for example, “I’m not racist, but...” or “I’m not anti-immigrant, but...”) (see Bonilla-Silva 2010 for a longer discussion of these and other discursive strategies of colorblind racism). The research design of this dissertation precludes comparisons between different levels of discourse to determine what differences (if any) exist in the expression of racist ideologies; however, this dissertation extends the findings of past research on colorblind racism in the 2016 presidential election. The larger the potential audience, the increased risk of blowback, and campaigns must be careful to tailor their message in a way that limits negative coverage.

Previous studies that have employed discourse analysis or related methodologies have provided a wealth of information with regard to how Mexican immigrants and immigration processes are portrayed and constructed through discourse. Common discursive constructions of Mexican immigrants portray them as job stealers (Aguirre 2012) and criminals (Aguirre and Simmers 2008; Flores 2003). While the intended target of the Mexican immigrant-as-criminal trope is purportedly *unauthorized* immigrants, this construction has the capacity to infuse all Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans with the “scent of illegality” (Aguirre and Simmers 2008:104). Common metaphors of immigrants include water metaphors (Demo 2005; Santa Ana, Moran and Sanchez 1998) and immigrants-as-animals (Santa Ana 1999; Santa Ana et al. 1998). Researchers have noted divergent language paths in reference to immigrants that align with opposing political positions; for example, Mehan (1997) noted that supporters of California Proposition 187 tended to use phrases like “illegal immigrants” and “illegal aliens” in reference to those affected by the proposition, while opponents used phrases like “non-resident workers” and “undocumented workers.” Race and gender intersects in the discursive construction of immigrants; Mexican immigrant women are portrayed as opportunistic breeders whose children are stealing resources that “belong” to the children of non-immigrant (white) families (Romero 2011).

While there is some degree of overlap in the findings of these past studies and the findings within this dissertation, this should not be taken as evidence that the discursive construction of immigrants is static. Previous research into the construction of immigrants in the early part of the twentieth century has shown how the media

construction of Mexican immigrants changed as a consequence of the Great Depression (Flores 2003). Over the course of the presidential campaign and reflected in the data here is a temporary discursive transformation of the themes associated with the term “refugee” as a result of the Paris terrorist attacks in late 2015. As previously discussed, the socio-historical context in which the discursive constructions take place is of utmost importance; newer constructions evoke or build upon those of old, but they shift and mutate in response to contextual factors and can only be fully appreciated with reference to those contextual factors.

DATA SOURCES AND DATA ANALYSIS

The primary source of data for this dissertation are direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries of the 2016 presidential candidates’ positions on immigration law or references to immigration and immigrants, as they appeared in three nationally recognized newspapers (*The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and the *Los Angeles Times*) in articles published between July 2015 and June 2016. In essence, this dissertation examines the candidates’ contributions to the political discourse on immigration, as mediated by the news media.

The research design for this dissertation reflects the focus of the study, which is not to analyze and critique every available statement made by candidates while on the campaign trail, but rather to analyze how candidates and their campaigns contribute to, affect, and reflect political discourse and public discourse more broadly. Presidential candidates are not the objects of study; newspaper articles that present their words and ideas are. For the voting public, mass media texts serve as a primary means of both understanding

immigration and learning what various political candidates “stand for” (see Flores 2003; Miller 1997; Santa Ana, Moran, and Sanchez 1998). News media help establish agendas by choosing what to focus on and how often to focus on it, and influence the public’s perception of ‘important issues’ (Dunaway, Branton, and Abrajano 2010). Additionally, news media are a vehicle through which the ideologies of elites is reproduced (van Dijk 1993b). Although daily newspapers do not occupy the heights of public influence that they once held due to the increased availability of multiple sources of information (in large part, thanks to the internet), they still exert an influence on public opinion (Diaz-Rico 2012).

Because a candidate’s statement, opinion, or policy statement needed to be picked up by the news media in order to be included in the analyses conducted here, this dissertation does not include an analysis of any statements made that were not covered by the news media (barring their appearance in any of the supplementary data sources below). While this might appear to be a gap in the research design, the fact that a candidate’s words needed to be “newsworthy” to make it to print is the point. Candidates may make statements on the campaign trail or the debate stage that contribute to political discourse in a localized sense, but the incorporation of sound bites and stances into the content offered by national news media promotes that candidate’s words to part of the national discussion. Many online and offline news sources covered the campaign but were limited with regard to national reach and voter access.

The online archives for *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* were searched for the following phrases: immigrant; immigration; Mexico;

Mexican; U.S. border; Latino; Latin America; Central America. The search results were manually examined to determine relevance. Articles were included if they discussed the immigration stance or views on immigration/immigrants of one or more presidential candidate. Direct quotes from politicians or affiliates and summarized quotes and stances (by newspaper journalists) were both analyzed, although the candidates' (or their campaigns') verbatim words were given primary analytic attention. Articles that only made oblique references to particular stances or views (ex: "Donald Trump's comments on Mexican immigrants") or that indistinguishably grouped multiple candidates together (ex: "Republicans' anti-immigrant views") were not included. No third party candidates were included, because no third party candidate's views on immigration appeared in the data using the methods outlined above. A central argument of this dissertation is that nationally distributed newspapers provide candidates with a national platform for contributing to the political discourse on immigration. Third party candidates like Jill Stein did make statements on immigration during the 2016 presidential election, but, if the coverage in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* can be considered a gauge of nationally distributed news as a whole, these statements failed to garner any significant media attention.

An additional source of data for this dissertation are the debate transcripts for the primary debates that took place within this same time frame (July 2015-June 2016). Debate transcripts were included due to the fact that many news articles that made reference to candidates' views on immigration often only included short fragments of the original statements or were presented in a way that relied on the reader's prior familiarity

with a particular quote (for example, after Donald Trump's announcement, a number of articles made reference to his comments on Mexican immigrants even months after the fact, but did so in a very abridged manner that did not so much inform unaware readers so much as they rendered salient or foregrounded those comments for informed readers). The debate transcripts helped to contextualize the statements found in the primary data source.

A final supplementary source of data is the campaign websites of Democratic and Republican presidential hopefuls, snapshotted during or just after the conclusion of their candidacy. While perhaps not as impactful as news media (a voter must choose to go to a candidate's website, rather than running across as part of their daily consumption of national news), these websites existed as the stable, semi-permanent exterior for the campaign and both reflect and contribute to the discourse on immigration. A voter whose interest was piqued based on a selection of text in *The New York Times* could then visit a candidate's website to view a carefully worded summary of the candidate in question. Unlike extemporaneous speech that might occur on the campaign trail, everything from the look to the word choices used on these websites was presumably carefully crafted.

In this dissertation I make frequent reference to candidates as individuals; however, such references are meant only for the sake of brevity. Whenever I make reference to "Donald Trump," or "Ted Cruz," or "Hillary Clinton," it would be more accurate to say "Donald Trump's campaign," "Ted Cruz's campaign," and "Hillary Clinton's campaign." From the data that were gathered for this dissertation, it is impossible to distinguish a candidate's *personal views* with their *political positions*. It is likewise impossible to

know what exchange of ideas took place prior to a candidate's public appearance, what debates take place, what kind of coaching (if any) a candidate received and why. The nexus of the ideas circulated and promoted by a candidate should not be treated as residing at any level below the campaign as a collective unit; the candidate is the face of the campaign and its most notable mouthpiece. As such, I make no attempts in the analyses presented in the following chapters to divine how a candidate *truly* feels; such divinations are outside the scope and purpose of this dissertation, which is intended to examine the 2016 presidential candidates' contributions to the political discourse on immigration.

The analyses were conducted manually and without the assistance of any dedicated qualitative analysis software such as ATLAS.ti. However, to help me organize the data and provide order to my analyses, I utilized the program Scrivener. While Scrivener is perhaps most popularly used for creative writing projects, the tools provided by Scrivener allow a user to collect and organize multiple strings of data within a single program file.

For a breakdown of the number of articles that were analyzed per month and per newspaper, see Appendix A. In the next chapter, I will discuss the main findings of this dissertation's discourse analysis.

CHAPTER 3: Discursive Themes

This dissertation examines the political discourse surrounding the 2016 presidential election in order to illustrate how presidential candidates and their campaigns infused racial meaning to immigration issues through a two-step process of conflating immigrants as a whole with Mexican and Latino immigrants in particular, and subsequently with the movement of migrants across the U.S.-Mexico border. In this chapter, I present the main findings from the discourse analysis performed on the data collected for this dissertation. The discourse analysis focused on themes, thematic linkages, targets, and discursive strategies. The objectives of this chapter are twofold: (1) to construct a portrait of how immigrants and immigration were characterized in the 2016 presidential election; (2) to lay the groundwork for arguing in chapter four that immigrants and immigration were racialized in U.S. political discourse.

The first part of this chapter discusses several dominant and minor themes that characterized the presidential candidates' statements regarding immigrants, immigration, and immigration policy. The dominant themes discussed in this chapter are the border, crime and criminals, and family/community and the minor themes discussed are weakness/strength, rationality/sanity/intelligence, and values. These lists are not exhaustive, but rather a curated selection that were chosen both because they recurred frequently over the period of time the data were collected and because they were utilized by multiple candidates at one point or another. Thematic linkages, such as the frequent co-occurrence of the themes *border*

and *crime and criminals*, and the implicit or explicit targets of statements employing these themes are also discussed.

The second part of this chapter covers the following discursive strategies utilized by presidential candidates and their campaigns: personalizing, distancing, and the construction of a good/bad migrant binary. The *good/bad binary* is constructed to reconcile the apparent conflict between the United States' immigrant history and a desire to tighten and restrict immigration to the United States. *Personalizing* is used to legitimize a candidate as an authority on immigration through personal (rather than political) experience, and *distancing* is used to create distance between a candidate and the potentially objectionable content of their statement.

A caveat is in order regarding Donald Trump and his media dominance. From his entry into the presidential race, much of the coverage of the 2016 presidential campaign involved Trump as either subject or referent. His "rapists" and "criminals" remark often functioned as journalistic shorthand to characterize his campaign in a relatively small amount of space, even when immigration law and immigrants were not the primary topic of an article. For example, following his controversial statement that Mexico was sending "rapists" and "criminals" into the United States, *The New York Times* covered the fallout as it related to his business dealing with Macy's, Univision, and the Professional Golfers Association, among others. Although the central focus of these articles was not on immigration policy per se, they nonetheless invoked Trump's contributions to the political discourse on

immigration in detailing the real or potential economic damages faced by Trump as a consequence of his incendiary remarks. As it relates to this dissertation, there are two consequences (one methodological, one analytic) that deserve brief attention.

First, with regard to the method used for this dissertation, because of how articles were selected, articles were included at an initial stage even if the only relevant reference within the article was a brief mention of Trump's initial campaign speech. A strict quantitative content analysis would perhaps lead a researcher to overstate the dominance of the "crime and criminals" theme due to this fact. While crime/criminals *was* a dominant theme, when only novel candidate contributions are considered, "crime and criminals" resides at approximately the same level as "the border" in terms of discursive prominence. Numerically speaking, the statements that received the most attention by the media as assessed by the three newspapers that were sampled from in this dissertation were Trump's "rapists" and "criminals" comment, and references to his promise to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Second, with regard to the analyses performed on the data for this dissertation, due to the media focus on Trump, Trump had a far greater influence on what themes were represented than any other candidate, including Hillary Clinton. The majority of the articles analyzed here were taken during the Republican primaries. Because of the greater focus on and importance of immigration during the Republican primaries, prominent Republican candidates—particularly Trump, Cruz, Bush, and Rubio—were featured more often than prominent Democratic candidates—Clinton

and Sanders. What may appear to be a somewhat lopsided focus on Republican candidates, and Trump in particular, is not a result of a deliberate analytic choice but rather of media attention and differing political priorities amongst Republican and Democratic candidates.

THEMES AND THEMATIC LINKAGES

Initial data coding involved identifying the thematic content of individual candidate statements (see Starks and Trinidad 2007). Each unique statement was assigned a preliminary code based on the overall structure and nature of the statement. Statements were then grouped into categories based on thematic similarities. For example, statements regarding immigrants as *rapists* or *murderers* were grouped together on the basis that both statements involve immigrants as threatening law-breakers or criminals. These larger groupings were then re-coded based on the thematic thread that linked the statements together. This coding and re-coding led to the development of three dominant themes: *the border, crime and criminals*, and *family and community*. Each of these themes will be discussed in greater detail below. While the three themes detailed here are not an exhaustive list of all discursive themes employed by the 2016 presidential candidates, taken together they offer a generalized representation of a slice of the political discourse on immigration and the thematic content of the discourse revolving around this national campaign.

The Border

Perhaps unsurprisingly, references to “the border” featured heavily in candidates’ statements regarding immigrants or immigration; this was particularly true for Republican candidates. The heavy emphasis on the border and the use of border imagery by candidates ties the political discourse on immigration to sovereignty discourse and the discursive construction of the nation-state (see Demo 2005). In the newspaper articles collected for this dissertation, references to the border are presented alone, such as in the following quote, or as part of a longer statement on immigration.^{8v}

“We need to secure the border,” says Carly Fiorina, another presidential contender (July 17, 2015 *The New York Times*)

The phrase “secure the border,” with minor variations, such as “secure *our* border” or “secure the *borders*”, appeared frequently in the statements analyzed for this dissertation. The following two quotes from Trump capture a slightly more significant variation that still falls under the umbrella of border (in)security. In the following quotes, Trump does not simply argue that the borders are weak: he argues that they are non-existent.

At another point, he [Trump] boomed: “If you don't have borders, you don't have a country. I'm sorry. ... We've gotta get our country back, folks.” (November 30, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

It cuts to Trump saying, “We don’t have a country right now. We have people pouring in ... and they’re doing tremendous damage if you look at the crime, if you look at the economy. We want to have borders. ... We don’t have borders right now.” (January 22, 2016 *Los Angeles Times*)

A dominant theme in Trump's campaign, evinced in his slogan-slash-campaign promise to "make America great again," was the restoration of the United States to some former state. His promise to build a wall and his repeated references to the border function as both evidence and emphasis of the need for this restoration. In the first of the two quotes by Trump above, Trump explicitly ties the border to sovereignty. The United States lacks meaningful borders, according to Trump, and the absence of borders prevents the United States from being a sovereign nation. In the second quote, pulled from a political ad targeted at Republican opponent Ted Cruz, Trump ties this argument to a specific time frame ("right now") and links the loss of sovereignty with uncontrollable immigration ("people pouring in") and the resulting damage ("tremendous damage") in terms of public safety and the economy. By making references to the collective ("we've gotta get our country back," "we want to have borders") Trump frames his cornerstone issue as a manifestation of the will of people (the pronoun "we" referring, presumably, to Americans as a whole).

In another ad for Donald Trump, terrorism is linked to immigration and an ungoverned border. The *Wall Street Journal* describes the ad:

Video footage later in the ad shows people apparently streaming freely across a border as a narrator says Trump will "stop illegal immigrants by building a wall on our southern border that Mexico will pay for" (January 04, 2016).

The ad ends with footage of Trump promising to "make America great again," once again linking a strong border and restrictive immigration with the restoration of the United States to some former ideal. As noted by the *Wall Street Journal* in the

article quoted above, the footage of individuals running across an apparent divide and overlaid with a narrator referring to the U.S.-Mexico border was not taken at the U.S.-Mexico border. Instead, the website PolitiFact uncovered that the footage was shot in Morocco. When called upon to justify this audio-visual sleight of hand, Trump's campaign argued that "the use of the clip was intentional and was 'selected to demonstrate the severe impact of an open border' and the threat posed by illegal immigration" (January 04, 2016 The New York Times).

In an interview on Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor," Trump elaborated:

"I think it's irrelevant," Trump said in an interview on Fox News Channel's "The O'Reilly Factor" Monday night. "So you can just take it any way you want, but it's really merely a display of what a dumping ground is going to look like. And that's what our country's becoming very rapidly." (January 04, 2016 *Wall Street Journal*).

In this quote, Trump moves the discussion from what the United States *is* to where the United States *is going to be*. This semantic shift from present (in the previous quotes, Trump emphasizes where "we" are) to the future allows him to justify the use of misleading footage. If, as Trump has argued, people are just "pouring in," then surely it would make more sense to broadcast footage from the U.S.-Mexico border to make his point. Instead, Trump subtly tweaks his argument from present state to current trajectory to justify using misleading imagery.

In the quotes above, Trump employs two key metaphors that are often used in anti-immigrant discourse: water metaphors (see Santa Ana et al. 1998) and immigrants/immigration as an environmental hazard (see Cisneros 2008). Trump states in the January 22 quote that "we have people pouring in" (and the January 4th

Wall Street Journal article describing Trump's ad refers to "people apparently streaming freely across the border"), while in the January 4th quote above he claims that the United States is becoming a "dumping ground." Through the use of metaphors, candidates create linkages between the target domain (in this case, immigrants) with a given source domain; these linkages prime the target domain for further associations beyond what is textually present in the metaphor itself (Santa Ana 1999). For example, referring to the United States as a "dumping ground" implies that immigrants are trash or hazardous waste and, further, that they are hazardous to the health of citizens through exposure to illness, disease, injury, and so on. By discursively framing the "problem" of immigration using particular metaphors, certain pathways or solutions to "deal with" the problem are made manifest (Cisneros 2008). Thus, if immigrants are an out-of-control, destructive surge of water, then the most logical solution would involve shutting off the water source: immigration policy or lax border enforcement. If immigrants turn the United States into a "dumping ground," then the solution is to "clean up" the United States via deportation.

Given the associated body of sovereignty discourse that is evoked through references to the border, it is perhaps not surprising that candidates' solutions to an insecure border often evoked the specter of the military and militarized law enforcement officials and organizations, such as in the following quote where Chris Christie was asked during a primary debate to explain why he was "skeptical" of Trump's plan to deport millions of undocumented immigrants:

[Christie] “What we need to do is to secure our border, and we need to do it with more than just a wall. We need to use electronics, we need to use drones, we need to use FBI, DEA, and ATF, and yes, we need to take the fingerprint of every person who comes into this country on a visa, and when they overstay their visa, we need to tap them on the shoulder and say, “you have overstayed your welcome; you’re taking advantage of the American people. It’s time for you to go.” (September 16, 2015 CNN Reagan Library Debate, Republican Primaries)

Before discussing this quote, it should be noted that while the data for this dissertation largely come from newspaper articles, debate transcripts and campaign websites are instructive because they provide a candidate’s full response, versus the often chopped and cobbled-together “sound bites” employed by journalists. There is reason to believe that debates furnished significant contributions to the political discourse on immigration in the 2016 presidential election. Viewership for the Republican primary debates was markedly higher than in 2008; the 12 Republican primary debates averaged 15.53 million viewers for the 2016 election versus 3.07 million viewers for the 14 debates in the 2008 election. Viewership for the Democratic primary debates in 2016 was also higher, 8 million on average versus 4.7 million in 2008 (Murphy 2016). More viewers tuned into the primary debates in 2016, which led to greater exposure to the candidates’ ideas from the mouths of the candidates themselves. Primary debates in the 2016 presidential election were a well-polished media spectacle that involved pre-game shows, post-debate recaps, and extensive news media coverage.

In the quote above, Christie advocates for the militarization of the border in several ways. He references “electronics” in general and “drones” in particular as

partial solutions aimed at border security. He cites three-letter government organizations (the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives). He conflates or obscures the distinction between fingerprinting immigrants upon entry to the United States and employing some means of surveilling non-citizens so that they can be “tapped on the shoulder” once their visa expires. Christie’s tone shifts midway through the quote from hardline to humanistic; the quote starts with military and law enforcement references and then switches to the “friendlier” or softer tactic of a “tap on the shoulder.” While Trump was known for not moderating his rhetoric, other Republican candidates attempted to strike a balance between advocating hardline stances against immigrants and a more moderate tone that would not alienate potential voters. Nonetheless, in the above quote Christie essentially advocates for the use of any and all technology and the deployment of any and all governmental organizations toward the goal of border enforcement.

Crime and Criminals

Consistent with previous research that has found a strong discursive association between immigration and criminality (see Cisneros 2008; Flores 2003; Nill 2011), *crime and criminals* was a dominant theme utilized by the candidates when discussing immigrants or immigration policy and law. It is evoked in one of the more popular terms used to describe the phenomenon of immigrants coming to the United States through alternative, unapproved means: illegal immigration. While “illegal” and “criminal” are not analogous terms, colloquially there is a great deal of

slippage between the two such that the distinction between an “illegal immigrant” and a “criminal immigrant” may be lost on many Americans, although to date there have been no studies that directly address this elision. Unlawful presence in the United States is a federal civil offense rather than a criminal one, and not all individuals who are unlawfully residing in the United States gained access to the United States via improper entry. While the semantic distinction between civil and criminal offenses appears lost in much of the media coverage on unauthorized immigration, these terms carry with them potentially divergent consequences: unlawful residence can lead to deportation (a civil proceeding); criminal offenses can result in incarceration. The terms “illegal immigrants” and “illegal immigration” inscribe onto a certain segment of the immigrant population a conviction or ruling that for most has not yet been rendered. Use of the term “illegal immigrant” and “illegal immigration” in reference to immigrants who have not yet been processed within the legal system places the cart before the horse, so to speak, and, as Lyon (2004) notes, is akin to referring to suspects as “convicted criminals” (p. 576).

The theme of *crime and criminals* is strongly present in Trump’s now-infamous announcement speech, partially quoted below:

“When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. . . . They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.” (July 9, 2015 Wall Street Journal)

As previously noted, Trump’s assertion that “Mexico” sends rapists and criminals across the U.S.-Mexico border, along with his promise to build a wall, was frequently

cited throughout the 2016 presidential campaign by journalists as background information; journalists often contextualized Trump's later statements and actions by referencing, in whole or in part, the above quote. Trump's enduring popularity arguably elevated the theme *crime and criminals* to heights it might not otherwise have attained; while criminality and immigration are closely linked discursively (Provine and Doty 2011), the intense media focus on Trump and his campaign ensured that Trump's construction of Mexican immigrants as criminals remained foregrounded more or less throughout the 2016 presidential campaign. By contrast, other constructions of Mexican immigrants, such as Jeb Bush's characterization of immigration as an "act of love" and the brief media flurry over "anchor babies", peaked and receded.

Of all the candidates to receive significant media attention, Trump was the candidate who most often made *overt* references to (Mexican) immigrants as criminals. While other candidates made statements that drew on the theme *crime and criminals* as well, they tended to do so in ways that were less direct. For example, a number of Republican candidates cited their opposition to what they called "amnesty."

"Let's have a moment of simple clarity: I oppose amnesty. I oppose citizenship. I oppose legalization," Cruz said of immigration legislation. (December 18, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

Mr. Rubio walked back his support, and his two new ads on Friday are titled "No Amnesty" and "Secure Our Borders." (January 15, 2016 *Wall Street Journal*)

Mr. Walker's spokeswoman, Ms. Strong, said he was "not for amnesty" and believed the border must be secured before any conversation begins about a pathway to legal status. (July 15, 2015 *The New York Times*)

While amnesty was referenced enough to be considered a topic in its own right, it falls within the theme *crime and criminals* due to the connotations it carries.

Amnesty is a status that is extended to criminals or persons who have committed an offense of some kind. The implication here, when candidates repeatedly and vociferously denounce any policy that could be interpreted as "amnesty," is that undocumented immigrants have committed an unforgivable offense that permanently marks them as ineligible for citizenship.

While immigrants were the most frequent target of the crime and criminals theme, political opponents and others occupying political positions were not immune from implications and outright accusations of criminality due to their stances or actions regarding immigration law. Marco Rubio was denounced by his Republican opponents as a member of the "Gang of Eight," a moniker given to a group of eight senators who wrote the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill. While the moniker predates the 2016 campaign, the term "gang" carries with it implications of unlawfulness or criminality. Rubio's Republican opponents repeatedly denounced the "Gang of Eight," and the bill that was created through this group's efforts was roundly condemned by Rubio's fellow Republican candidates as an attempt to offer "amnesty" to undocumented immigrants.

“If you look at the ‘Gang of Eight,’ one individual on this stage broke his promise to the men and women who elected him and wrote the amnesty bill,” Senator Ted Cruz said of Mr. Rubio during Thursday’s Republican debate. And as Mr. Rubio defended himself, Mr. Trump’s campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski, posted “MARCO ‘AMNESTY’ RUBIO” on Twitter. (February 28, 2015 *The New York Times*)

In this quote, Rubio’s participation in the “Gang of Eight” is characterized by Cruz as putting him at odds with the will of the people or as evidence of Rubio’s outright defiance of the voters who elected him into office. Rubio’s “gang” membership, his hand in an “amnesty bill,” and his untrustworthiness (“broke his promise”) are bundled together to present an image of Rubio as a veritable criminal colluding with other government criminals to defy the American people. It is also worth noting that in this quote, and in the news article it is pulled from, Rubio-the-candidate is rendered discursively silent. The article largely focuses on Rubio’s actions and interactions at the time the bill in question was being drafted; it includes direct quotes from that time, but does not feature any contemporary quotes from Rubio. Instead, Rubio is cast as a mute defender (“Mr. Rubio defended himself”) wedged in between accusations and condemnations of his alleged affinity for “amnesty.”

As a term meant to characterize certain types of immigration policy, “amnesty” was used almost exclusively by Republicans, and was aimed outward rather than used to characterize one’s own policy. Among democrats, references to “amnesty” were rare; when referring to their own positions, Democratic candidates tended to prefer the term “path to citizenship.” Cruz was the candidate who, based on the articles analyzed for this dissertation, made the most references to amnesty. His use

of the term was not exclusively aimed at his Republican primary opponents, but at “Washington” as well, as can be seen in the *Wall Street Journal* article quoted below, summarizing Cruz’s performance at a Republican primary debate:

Cruz: sharp on illegal immigration. Took on his own party's leadership, slamming the ‘Washington cartel’ that supports ‘amnesty’ for those living in the U.S. illegally. But the accomplished college debater lacked a breakout moment. (August 07, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

The use of this theme against multiple targets (immigrants, political opponents, Washington as a whole) not only discursively transforms “illegal” immigrants into criminal immigrants, it also transforms support for certain political positions into criminal acts. Favoring a “pathway to citizenship” for unauthorized immigrants is not only wrong according to these candidates, it’s outright criminal, and un-American.

Closely related to *crime and criminals*, candidates emphasized the importance of *rule of law*, such as when Cruz asserted that “we can embrace legal immigration while believing in the rule of law” (quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, November 10, 2015) and when Trump tweeted that “a country must enforce its borders. Respect for the rule of law is at our country's core. We must build a wall!” (cited in the *Los Angeles Times*, July 02, 2015). Adherence to and respect for the rule of law is the flip side of the lawlessness inherent within *crime and criminals*, and while this sister theme is used in ways that are not identical to *crime and criminals*, it is present by implication. Criminals are criminals because they break the law; “bad” immigrants break the law, while “good” immigrants observe the law.

[Donald Trump] “We have a country based on laws. I will make sure that those laws are adhered to.” (September 17, 2015 *The New York Times*)

Much like his common talking points with regard to the border, Trump relates rule of law to the status of the United States as a sovereign nation. The above quote is pulled from Trump’s response to a question on immigration at a Republican primary debate. Trump’s assertion that “we have a country based on laws” is embedded within a longer answer where he foregrounds criminality by citing the presence of some “really bad dudes” who are “in this country from outside,” by asserting a nonspecific connection between immigration and “[g]angs all over the place,” and by arguing that although those who “deserve” to can eventually come back, those with “a bad record,” who have been arrested or jailed, will “never [come] back.” In this statement, Trump elides different levels of offense, to say nothing of the fact that being arrested for a crime is not the same as being convicted of a crime. Instead, a criminal is a criminal is a criminal. The vague distinction between worthy immigrants who will be allowed to return and unworthy immigrants who will face eternal banishment gives Trump or his supporters room to deny that Trump is calling all immigrants or unauthorized immigrants criminals, but through constant references to crime and criminal acts, Trump reinforces the connection.

Mr. Trump proposes removing from the United States 11 million undocumented immigrants within two years. He poses the challenge in simple terms: “They say you have to go through a huge legal process. You don’t. They are illegal.” (February 28, 2016 *The New York Times*)

In this quote, the construction of undocumented immigrants as a separate class of people that exist outside the rule of law is even more overt. In the previous quote,

Trump presents criminality as an unshakable status, particularly through his assertion that the “bad dudes” will never be allowed to return, which effectively rules out the possibility of redemption for past misdeeds, but the focus is implicitly on action, by referencing records, arrests, and jail time. Here, however, illegality is something that undocumented immigrants embody; he states clearly that “[t]hey *are* illegal” (emphasis mine) and this puts them outside the jurisdiction of the U.S. legal system and strips them of any and all legal protections. The discursive construction of *illegality* as embodiment is similarly, but perhaps, due to its ubiquity, more subtly, accomplished through the use of the phrase “illegal aliens.”

Family and Community

Along with the image of the “hardworking immigrant” (another recurring theme that will not be covered at length here but was present in the data), candidates who favored less restrictionist policies and those who objected to the dehumanizing and criminalizing rhetoric favored by other candidates made frequent references to family and community. The *family and community* theme was typically employed in either one of two ways: constructing immigrants as family and community members, or emphasizing the consequences of hardline immigration policies for the families and communities that undocumented immigrants belong to. In general, the former was utilized to justify a candidate’s immigration stance or policy proposal, while the latter was utilized to critique the stances or policy proposals of others.

[Clinton] [o]n undocumented immigrants: “So we should offer hard-working, law-abiding immigrant families a path to citizenship. Not second-class status.” (May 25, 2015 *The New York Times*)

In this quote, Hillary Clinton makes a moral case for extending citizenship to unauthorized immigrants, by emphasizing that immigrants are *hard workers* and *law-abiders*. She situates immigration as a characteristic of the family, rather than individual immigrants, and thus links the consequences—“second-class status”—to the family unit. Candidate statements that drew on the *crime and criminals* theme made no reference to immigrant families or families of immigrants; instead, they referenced immigration as a individual phenomenon.

Republican candidates often took a hardline, restrictionist approach to immigration, and overall made greater use of the *crime and criminals* theme than *family and community*. However, in the extensive field of Republican primary candidates, there were several candidates who sought to moderate and counter some of the more extreme proposals advanced by their fellow republicans. Chief among them was Jeb Bush, who often found himself on the defensive during primary debates due to his “moderate” stance and purported bias (Bush’s wife is of Mexican descent).

Mr. Bush also took issue with Mr. Trump’s proposal. “It would tear communities apart,” he said before noting the potential political damage the party has done to itself in waging this debate over what to do about immigrants in the country illegally. (November 11, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

In this short quote, Bush emphasizes that Trump’s hardline immigration stance would have ramifications for entire communities. While it is impossible to draw many conclusions from this five-word soundbite, it is worth noting that Bush’s statement could be interpreted as emphasizing the consequences of Trump’s

immigrant stance for “innocent bystanders” in the community. Conversely, the previous quote by Clinton draws additional persons (entire families) under the umbrella of unauthorized immigration. By arguing that Trump’s immigration proposal would “tear communities apart,” Bush is drawing attention to the community ties that would be broken if a given percentage of community members were deported. One end of those ties is held up by the unauthorized immigrants facing deportation, but the immigrant status of community members holding up the other end of those ties are left undefined. Bush’s statement suggests that a *community* is a social grouping that has value and is worth preserving, even if it entails overlooking or excusing the transgressions of some of its members.

Crime and criminals and *family and community* were juxtaposed against one another often enough to be considered the primary theme/counter-theme in the discursive construction of immigrants. The dialectical nature of these themes is perhaps best evidenced in the public reactions of candidates to the statements of their rivals. Embedded within the opinions and policy statements of candidates were two competing immigrant narratives, characterized by either the “crime and criminals” or “family and community” theme. By drawing on one of these themes, candidates advanced one of two narratives: (unauthorized) immigrants as dangerous criminals or immigrants as (harmless, good) family- and community-members. While no candidate asserted that all immigrants fell exclusively within one or the other narrative, these narratives can be interpreted as default positions that particular immigrants might stray from (even Trump’s bombastic “criminals”

and “rapists” line was accompanied by the qualifying statement that “some” he “assume[s], are good people”). Competing campaigns jockeyed to assert one of these two immigrant narratives as the dominant or “correct” narrative in an effort to justify their own policy stances or their overall goodness of fit for the presidential office.

In the 2016 presidential election, given the extreme media dominance of Trump’s campaign, this thematic contest occurred most often when Republican and Democratic primary candidates were called upon to support or denounce the latest “Trumpism” to make the media rounds. Due to Trump’s heavy utilization of the *crime and criminals* theme, it was this narrow discursive construction of immigrants (as criminals) that his opponents had to counter, if they wanted to challenge his claims and policy proposals (and not all of his opponents did). The struggle for narrative dominance can be seen in the November 11, 2015 *Wall Street Journal* quote provided in *family and community* section above, as well as the two quotes provided below.

“Think about the families; think about the children,” Mr. Kasich said. “Come on, folks, we know you can’t pick them up and ship them across the border. It’s a silly argument. It’s not an adult argument.” (November 11, 2016 *The New York Times*)

“The way I look at this,” Bush said last year, “is someone who comes to our country because they couldn’t come legally, they come to our country because their families — the dad who loved their children — was worried that their children didn’t have food on the table.... Yes, they broke the law, but it’s not a felony. It’s an act of love.” (July 28, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

Many of the prime examples of *family and community* being used to counter the *crime and criminals* theme came from Trump's Republican primary opponents. While Democratic candidates employed a similar strategy of stressing immigrants as family and community members, the news articles collected for this dissertation provided quotes of Republican candidates using the *family and community* theme to characterize immigrants and their motives slightly more often than they provided quotes of Democratic candidates doing the same. This pattern does not necessarily hold if one were to assess the complete body of text for each of the major presidential candidates; because so much of the news coverage during the primaries focused on Trump, particularly with regard to the topic of immigration, other Republican candidates, being the more immediate opponents, either felt compelled or were asked to respond to Trump's consistent use of *crime and criminals* when discussing immigration. This trend, then, is perhaps attributable to the nature of the data and the lopsided attention given to Republican candidates during the data collection period. On the Democratic side of the race, Clinton was often treated as the official candidate of the Democratic party even before she clinched the nomination, and very little article space was dedicated to comparing and contrasting Bernie Sanders' and Clinton's immigration stances.

Not all references to family, family structures, or family roles were favorable to immigrants, however. Motherhood is often treated as a venerated status in the United States, but that veneration does not extend to immigrant women who are either pregnant or with children (see Romero 2011). Instead, immigrant mothers

are characterized as willful exploiters of U.S. law and the United States' "generosity."

During his campaign, Trump challenged the concept of birthright citizenship and cited "anchor babies" as a threat to the United States' sovereignty and health.

"They're [Americans] disgusted when a woman who's nine months pregnant walks across the border, has a baby, and you have to take care of that baby for the next 85 years," Trump, wearing a red baseball cap emblazoned with his "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan, told the crowd. (September 15, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

In this quote, Trump overstates the ease with which immigrants are able to cross the U.S.-Mexico border by likening crossing the border to a casual stroll. He characterizes these children as burdens to the American populace that must be "taken care of," and assumes that such children will rely on state services for their entire adult life. While these children are legally U.S. citizens, they are placed in a separate class from children born to nonimmigrant parents, and the act of their birth is characterized as a transfer of responsibility from the mother to the United States.

"Anchor babies" did not exclusively refer to the American-born children of Mexican and Central American mothers. Bush attempted to neutralize the backlash he received over the use of the term "anchor baby" by asserting that the term was "more related to Asian people" (January 7, 2016 *Los Angeles Times*). The discursive linkages between birthright citizenship, "anchor babies," and specific racialized groups will be explored further in chapter four.

Among the dominant themes presented here, the strongest thematic linkage was "the border" and "crime and criminals." Presidential candidates frequently made

reference to what they perceived to be an open, porous, or unguarded southern border and how the state of the U.S.-Mexico border leaves the United States vulnerable to an influx of crime and criminals. This can be seen in the quote, covered earlier in this chapter, where Trump links an insecure border to crime. This link is also strongly apparent in a tweet by Trump, quoted by the *Los Angeles Times* on December 09, 2015, that “druggies, drug dealers, rapists and killers are coming across the southern border. When will the U.S. get smart and stop this travesty?” This tweet is strongly reminiscent of the line in Trump’s announcement speech where he asserted that Mexico is sending rapists and other criminals into the country.

The shooting death of Kathryn Steinle in July of 2015 by an undocumented immigrant who had been deported several times was used by some candidates as evidence of border insecurity and the consequences of lax border security for U.S. citizens.

Donald Trump weighed in first, calling Steinle's death "totally preventable" and saying it proved the need for a wall at the Mexican border. Democratic hopeful Hillary Rodham Clinton soon joined critics, saying on CNN that San Francisco "made a mistake" and should have accommodated Lopez-Sanchez's deportation. (July 14, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

Donald J. Trump, the billionaire real estate magnate running for the Republican presidential nomination, has blamed what he says is a lax stand on immigration for Ms. Steinle’s death, calling it “yet another example of why we must secure our border immediately.” (October 20, 2015 *The New York Times*)

This tragedy, which occurred early in Trump’s campaign (only a couple weeks after Trump’s announcement speech), was used to bolster the narrative advanced

by Trump that undocumented immigrants pose a threat to Americans and that undocumented immigration should be considered a public safety hazard. By contrast, for Clinton, the media attention given to Steinle's death posed a threat to the narrative she advanced, that immigrants, and undocumented immigrants, are hard-working family members. The discursive framing of Steinle's shooting death was different depending on which narrative a candidate prioritized: either her shooting death was a prototypical example of "the problem" or it was a tragic outlier.

In addition to the dominant themes discussed above, a number of minor themes played recurring roles in the candidates' statements regarding immigrants and/or immigration. These minor themes often appeared alongside one of the previously discussed dominant themes, and functioned principally to underscore the importance of the dominant theme by making an argumentative appeal to the recipient of the message as to the rightness *of* the message. Three minor themes are particularly noteworthy and will be developed here. These three minor themes are: *values, weakness and strength, and common sense, sanity, and intelligence.*

Values

Several value sets were cited by candidates when attempting to justify their own immigration stance or challenge the immigration stance of an opponent. "American values" was the value set most frequently cited, but candidates also made appeals to "Christian values" and global and local humanitarianism or "human values." Candidates drawing on this minor theme either used a particular value set to justify their policy

stance by framing their policy stance, their treatment of immigrants, or the values of immigrant groups themselves as concordant or discordant with the identified value set.

“I don't think we should eliminate our support for refugees,” Bush said in an interview with Bloomberg Politics. “It's been a noble tradition in our country for many years.” (November 11, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

In this quote, Bush uses the term “noble tradition” in lieu of an explicit reference to “American values,” but his phrasing evokes a similar idea; by stating that the tradition is positive (“noble”) and an entrenched practice in the United States (“for many years”), Bush is arguing that “support for refugees” is a part of the country’s history, one which should be valued and not discarded. By arguing that this “tradition” should continue, Bush is implicitly making the case that support for refugees is or should be part of the national value set. This quote stands in contrast to the stances of other Republican candidates who, in late 2015 and largely as a response to the November terrorist attack in Paris, vocally pushed back against the possibility of Syrian refugee resettlement in the United States.

In the statement quoted below, Republican candidate Rick Perry criticizes the harsh political rhetoric directed at Mexican and Latino immigrants in what the article writer identified as a “veiled shot” at Donald Trump:

“Demeaning people of Hispanic heritage is not just ignorant, it betrays the example of Christ. We can enforce our laws and our borders, and we can love all who live within our borders, without betraying our values,” Mr. Perry said. (September 11, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

Perry's statement is not a repudiation of a hardline immigration policy stance per se, but rather how that policy is packaged. He argues that this packaging is incompatible with Christian values, while simultaneously arguing that immigration and border enforcement is not *ipso facto* antithetical to those values.

Finally, candidates cited *values* in their attempts to push back against the negative portrayal of certain immigrants by candidates like Trump.

[Jeb Bush]: "My wife is a Mexican-American. She's an American by choice. She loves this country as much as anybody in this room. And she wants a secure border. But she wants to embrace the traditional American values that make us special and make us unique." (September 16, 2015 CNN Reagan Library Debate, Republican Primaries)

On the campaign trail, Bush pointed to his relationship with his wife to legitimize and justify his immigration policy stance. The quoted text follows an attempt by Bush during the debate to get Trump to apologize for his harsh rhetoric—Trump refused. Bush identifies his wife as an "American by choice" who "loves this country"; she opted into the national social contract and her existence is not a threat to the United States or its cultural values because she "wants to embrace" them. Interestingly, Bush casts his wife's relationship to "traditional American values" as a desire ("wants to") versus an action ("embraces"), suggesting a possible roadblock between his wife and her full embrace of what makes the United States "special" and "unique." While Bush does not elaborate on this point, making it difficult to infer the intended meaning behind his word choice, it's possible he is setting up Trump and his political camp as the roadblock that prevents his wife from being able to fully embrace American values. Bush's focus here is narrow (dispelling the negative

characterization of his wife), but by disputing his wife's treatment and presenting her as a *deliberate* American, Bush opens the door to the idea that there are other immigrants like his wife, and that the rhetoric employed by Trump negatively affects them.

Weakness and strength

Weakness and strength are a twin set of minor themes that were particularly favored by Republican candidates, but were at times employed by Democratic candidates as well. With regard to immigration in particular, "strength" was often (but not exclusively) tied to restrictionist policies and "weakness" was tied to less restrictionist or more "humanistic" policies. Take, for example, the following tweet from Donald:

Marco Rubio is totally weak on illegal immigration & in favor of easy amnesty. A lightweight choker - bad for #USA! (November 11, 2015, *Los Angeles Times*)

"Weak on immigration" was a recurring phrase used by several Republican candidates, but in this tweet, the weakness theme is threaded throughout Trump's entire statement. Trump characterizes "amnesty" as an "easy" solution to a proposed problem (unstated here, but covered elsewhere in this chapter are quotes by Trump that suggest the "problem" is lax observance of laws, a porous border, and high undocumented immigration), thus implying that the alternative (mass deportation and the construction of a border wall) is more difficult. He states that Rubio is "weak on illegal immigration" and a "lightweight choker," and culminates his tweet by asserting that this weakness makes him "bad" for the United States.

A strong President can and must secure the border. (www.tedcruz.org, accessed March 14, 2016)

In this statement, pulled from Cruz's campaign website, Ted Cruz ties a president's strength to border security. Embedded within a longer webpage titled "CRUZ IMMIGRATION PLAN," the text then goes on to assert that "[u]nder current law, there is more than enough legal authority to do so; what is missing is the political will." In other words, it is only past presidents' *weak character* that has prevented the United States from "securing" the border. In contrast to the previous quote where the characterization of the candidate (Rubio) is an extension of his policy stance, here action extends from character: A strong president does [X], in contrast to [doing X] makes one a strong president. "Strength" was most often treated as a character trait that influences a candidate's policy stances, whereas weakness was a consequence *of* a candidate's actions or policies.

Chapter four will discuss the ways the political discourse on immigration conflates immigration more broadly and Mexican immigration in particular, but it is worth noting the language used here: Cruz refers in the above quote to "the" border, and shortly after on that same webpage refers to the "porous southern border" as the border that needs to be secured. Cruz's "immigration plan" lacks any reference to the U.S.-Canada border and treats the U.S.-Mexico border as the only shared border, or at least the only one of consequence in the immigration debate. This language is not an idiosyncratic quirk of Cruz's campaign website but in fact is common to much of the political discourse on immigration; it is taken for granted

that references to *the* border are references to the U.S.-Mexico border.

“They forget a fundamental lesson about our great country: Being an open and tolerant society does not make us vulnerable,” [Hillary] Clinton said. “It’s at the core of our strength of who we are. It’s a creed as old as our nation’s founding.” (January 07, 2016 *Los Angeles Times*)

The twin themes of strength and weakness typically manifested in one of three ways: in reference to immigration policy, as a broad characterization of a candidate, or, as in the above quote, in reference to the nation as a collective. Strength and weakness appeared together, to juxtapose a candidate against his or her opponents in terms of character or policy, or separately, to denigrate an opponent or to buoy oneself. In the latter case, the opposing theme was nonetheless present in the subtext as a counter to the stated theme. Denigrating an opponent as “weak on illegal immigration” (as in the above quoted tweet) carries with it the implication that one is “strong,” and vice versa.

This dual theme did not go without challenge. Although these challenges did not appear frequently, some candidates did, on occasion, attempt to destabilize the assumptions embedded within this dual theme, most notably that a hardline immigration policy equals strength, and compromises (in the case of Rubio’s “Gang of Eight” bill) and a more humanistic approach (such as that espoused by Bush) equal weakness. In the following quote, Bush challenges Trump’s claims of strength by citing a handful of Trump’s public feuds and reframing his statements as bullying behavior (insults) targeting vulnerable populations:

"It is not strong to insult women; it is not a sign of strength when you insult Hispanics," Bush said. "(Or) when you say that a prisoner of war is a loser because they got caught" (January 23, 2016 *Wall Street Journal*).

Common sense/sanity/intelligence

The third minor theme covers argumentative appeals to common sense, sanity, and intelligence. While these three ideas are not wholly interchangeable, they are similar in that they attempt to evoke in the recipient or listener a shared sensibility. Common sense, sanity, and intelligence are all characteristics that are generally considered valuable—setting aside the denigration on the Right of “educated elites,” which is interlocked with, but not wholly interchangeable with, “intelligence”—but in the political discourse on immigration they share a commonality in that they are ill-defined but for their attachment to certain policy positions. In other words, a policy is common sense, sane, and/or an intelligent position to hold because the speaker says it is. Typically, this manifested as a candidate arguing that restrictionist immigration policies and/or heavier border security is common sense, sane, and/or the intelligent thing to do; whereas current immigration policy and border enforcement fails on the grounds that it is not concordant with common sense, is not based on sane or logical thinking, and/or is overall an unintelligent policy.

Speaking on ABC, Ms. Fiorina said, “People are angry that a common-sense thing like securing the border or ending sanctuary cities is somehow considered extreme. It’s not extreme, it’s common sense.” (July 12, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

In the article that this quote is pulled from, Fiorina’s statement is provided without context so it is not possible to determine who is the owner of the position

she's arguing against—Democrats? Then-President Obama? The federal government? Pro-immigration organizations?—but Fiorina is asserting that while some entity or entities argue that these two propositions are extreme, they are, in fact, common sense propositions. She asserts the common sense nature of these propositions twice, and links what is common sense to the sensibilities of the nation's populace ("People are angry"). What is seen as common sense is derived from, or reflected in, the sentiments of the American people, and this stands in contrast to whatever entities are lambasting these propositions as "extreme."

"Not a good deal: We get the drugs, they get the money," he [Trump] said. "The drug cartels are going wild. They cannot believe how stupid our government is." (September 15, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

In this quote, Trump likens U.S. immigration to a lopsided business deal where the terms of the deal stand as testament to each side's relative intelligence. It is difficult from the limited direct quotes provided to determine whether, in this specific statement, the "they" Trump is referring to is the drug cartels or the Mexican government. Grammatically, the former is implied, but Trump has also asserted on numerous occasions—perhaps most notably in his announcement speech—that the Mexican government is willfully exploiting the United States. The article this quote is pulled from consists of chopped up quotes and paraphrases of a speaking event where Trump targeted the United States' relationship with Mexico, Japan, and China in trade and immigration. All three relationships, according to Trump, are characterized by uneven terms that put the United States on the losing end.

In their statements on immigration, candidates explicitly or implicitly targeted one or more problematic actors. While much of the research on the discourse surrounding immigration focuses on the ways in which immigrants are targeted and scapegoated, government actors and government institutions are also problematized (see Demo 2005). Within the three dominant themes outlined above, five primary targets can be identified: immigrants, refugees (as a “special case” of immigrants), political opponents, public and government officials, and “the government.”

DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

Candidates employed a number of discursive strategies in an effort to legitimize their policy stances and normalize the logic that underpinned those positions. For the purposes of this dissertation, ‘discursive strategies’ refer to attempts to discursively transform and (re)define self, other, or object (Carvalho 2005:3). Through their words, candidates create categories of people and maneuver those categories closer together or farther apart. These categories may be hierarchically ranked, such as when candidates create and distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ migrants. Candidates can then draw themselves closer to the targets of their statements and policy proposals, and they can distance themselves from the harmful implications of their words. Three strategies will be discussed here: personalizing, distancing, and the construction of a good/bad migrant binary.

Good and Bad Migrants

The United States' unique history and global position has led to it being touted as a "nation of immigrants." The idea that the United States operates as a haven or destination for emigrants from across the world is an essential part of its cultural ethos. U.S. politicians who wish to adopt a hardline immigration stance must find a way to navigate around or accommodate the image of the United States as a nation that welcomes immigrants with open arms. With the notable exception of the "Muslim ban" initially proposed by Trump in late 2015, no candidate proposed a complete shutdown of immigration into the United States. Candidates were careful to clarify that at least *some* immigration was permissible or desirable. Even in Trump's references to Mexico and Mexican immigrants, who were his favorite targets when discussing immigration policy (barring his occasional shift in focus to Muslims), Trump did not advocate for a wholesale block on all incoming Mexican and Latino immigrants. Instead, Republican, and to an extent Democratic, candidates had to distinguish between desirable immigration and undesirable immigration in justifying their policy stances. In so doing, candidates constructed or reinforced a binary model of good and bad migrants. This good/bad binary is not unique to the 2016 presidential election campaign; despite the image of the United States as a country with open arms, there have always been groups that were more welcome than others, in addition to instances of immigration restrictions targeting specific nations. The good/bad binary constructed by candidates in the 2016 presidential election is a continuation of shifting historic trends. *Who* is targeted as

undesirable or desirable and the exact specifics of *how* they are targeted reflects salient anxieties of the era, but much of the script used to target specific groups gets recycled across generations (see Delgado and Perea 2014).

The fundamental schema used by Republican candidates during the primaries to structure the good/bad binary was legal/illegal. Good immigrants entered the United States *legally*. Bad immigrants entered the United States *illegally*. The good/bad binary assigns moral value and desirability to groups of immigrants, and through the use of the legal/illegal schema, candidates make a judgment on the entirety of a person on the basis of their immigrant status.

“Tremendous infectious disease is pouring across the border. The United States has become a dumping ground for Mexico and, in fact, for many other parts of the world,” Trump’s statement said. “On the other hand, many fabulous people come in from Mexico and our country is better for it. But these people are here legally, and are severely hurt by those coming in illegally.” (July 8, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

In this quote, Trump attempts to strike a balance in his portrayal of Mexican immigrants. The stronger imagery is tied to the “bad” group of unauthorized immigrants; he identifies disease (“tremendous infectious disease”) and refuse (“dumping group”) as consequences of unauthorized immigration. Immigrants are the embodiments of disease and refuse, as they are the ones that are carrying disease across the border, and they are what transforms the United States into a “dumping ground.” He attempts to counterbalance this imagery with the assertion that there are good Mexican immigrants (“fabulous people”). One condition of membership in this category is legal status. The latter half of this statement lacks the

visceral imagery of the first half, and the positive consequences associated with this group of immigrants goes undefined (“our country is better for it”).

These categories are not wholly rigid and impermeable. Despite his generally hardline immigration stance, Trump made concessions for “the good people” to return to the United States. This leaves open the possibility that some unauthorized immigrants are “good people,” or at a minimum capable of *becoming* “good people.” First, however, they must be deported. There is no allowance, in Trump’s view, for the “good ones” to remain in their communities in the United States.

Trump said a tough deportation policy was needed because “there’s definitely evidence” of crimes linked to immigrants living in the country illegally. He repeated comments he’s made previously, noting that: “The good people can come back.” (August 17, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

The *crime and criminals* theme is a fundamental component of the good/bad binaries advanced by candidates. Bad migrants are criminals and law-breakers, good immigrants are law-abiders. As previously discussed in the section on the *crime and criminals* theme, the legal distinction between illegal/criminal is often elided; “illegal immigrants” commit criminal acts, and “illegal immigrants” are criminals by virtue of their unlawful residence within the United States. Disregard of one law or legal process (coming to or residing within the United States unlawfully) is effectively treated as evidence of a criminal mindset.

“The 12 million who are here, we ought to find out who they are,” [Kasich] said on CNN. “If they’ve been law-abiding over a period of time they ought to be legalized and they ought to be able to stay here. There are people who contribute a lot to the U.S.” (August 9, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

As with the first Trump quote discussed in this section, the positive consequences and contributions of unauthorized immigrants remains vague (here, Kasich states only that they “contribute a lot to the U.S.”). Based on the statements analyzed for this dissertation, no clear picture emerged from Republican candidates as to what benefits unauthorized immigrants provide at a local or national level. By contrast, the negative consequences of unauthorized immigrants are hyper-defined and fairly consistent across Republican candidates: crime, drugs, disease, and jobs.

Trump said it was a mutually agreed upon move to protect his friends in the organization from dealing with potential backlash over his remarks, in which he said, referring to Mexican immigrants: “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” He later added, “And some, I assume, are good people.” (August 8, 2015 *The New York Times*)

The Democratic candidate field was much smaller than the Republicans’, and Hillary Clinton was the candidate most often quoted within or focused on in articles that dealt with the politics of immigration and the 2016 presidential election. As a consequence, the bulk of the Democratic party’s responses to and refutations of Republican statements during the data period came from the Clinton campaign. Clinton alternated between pushing back against specific Trump’s statements and against a generic version of this binary that was attributed to “Republicans” where “illegal immigrants”/“aliens” are bad and “legal immigrants” are good. The quoted statements from Clinton often did not make specific reference to Trump or Trump’s statements, but the articles in which they were quoted often juxtaposed Clinton’s statements against Trump’s. Clinton (and to an extent, other Democratic candidates) employed two basic routes to accomplish this: attempting to disrupt the connection

between good/bad immigrants and legality/illegality, for example, by arguing that the principle organizing schema should be based on *hard work* not status, and citing individual immigrant narratives to contest the group uniformity implied by Republican candidates through their use of legal status as a means to sort immigrants into groups of good and bad migrants.

Clinton: "A lot of the people who are talking so dramatically about the immigration system should spend some time with some farmers who are looking for people to do the hard work to harvest their crops or milk their cows or pick their oranges," she said, before calling for comprehensive immigration reform to level the field of agricultural workers. (August 26, 2015 *The New York Times*)

"If you work hard, if you love this country and want nothing more to build a good future for you and your children, we should give you a way to come forward and become a citizen," [Clinton] said. (December 14, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

By citing "hard work" as a key factor in deportation, Clinton shifts the discussion away from a strict consideration of the law to the question of "deservedness"—who among the millions of unauthorized immigrants in the United States *deserves* to stay or deserves citizenship. Clinton does not define what constitutes hard work, but in the first quote she associates hard work with manual labor, specifically routine tasks delegated by farmers to help maintain and run a farm. This quote arose during a campaign stop in Iowa, characterized by the article as an attempt by Clinton to reach out to "rural America," rather than a stump speech that focused specifically on immigration. In the second quote, Clinton does not link hard work with agricultural work in particular, instead leaving it undefined and linking it to two other vague characteristics (love of country and desire for a future) when describing an

immigrant in the abstract who deserves access to what candidates and the news media routinely described as a “pathway to citizenship.”

Personalizing

Candidates attempted to legitimize their policy stances or immigration views by moving themselves close to (or among) the immigrant population in the United States. This took several forms. Clinton, for example, stated that as a child she babysat the children of migrant farmworkers.

Clinton emphasized her support for passage of immigration legislation, vowed to expand upon Obama's executive order deferring deportation of people brought to the country illegally as children, and charged Republicans with supporting policies that would not grant undocumented workers a pathway to full citizenship. She described volunteering to babysit the families of Mexican migrant farmworkers when she was about 10 or 11 years old in Illinois. (July 13, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

This was a relatively weak form of personalizing, which drew Clinton closer to the immigrant community by establishing personal contact with members of the community. By asserting that she has been ‘touched by’ immigrant communities at a formative time in her life, Clinton is positioning herself in such a way that she can argue that she has the best interests of immigrants at heart. Trump also could be viewed as employing personalizing-by-association of a sort, but through a different type of association and with the apparent goal of disavowing the criticism he faced over his treatment of Mexican and Latino immigrants. Faced with criticism over his incendiary remarks aimed at Mexican immigrants at the start of his campaign, Trump made statements like the following:

"Do you know how many Latinos work for me? Do you know how many Hispanics work for me?" Trump said. "Thousands. They love me." (August 25, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

In Clinton's example, the intent appears to be to justify her immigration stance by painting a picture of herself as someone who has had contact with members of the immigrant community and thus can relate to them on a humanistic level. Trump's statement is an attempt to absolve him of criticism by citing his role as an employer of "thousands" of Latinos, and stating a unidirectional emotional tie ("they love me"). He positions himself closer to the immigrant community, but it is a professional closeness, versus Clinton's childhood connection.

A stronger form of personalizing, employed by several candidates, was the construction of an immigrant narrative that placed the candidate's family's roots outside the United States, thus portraying themselves as sensitive to the struggles of immigrants in the United States today. Kasich, Sanders, Cruz, and Rubio were among those who made reference to their family's immigrant past.

"I am the son of a Cuban immigrant and have long been a voice that America should not just welcome but celebrate legal immigrants," said Mr. Cruz, one of several Republican presidential candidates on hand for the pope's address. "That is entirely consistent with believing in the rule of law that we should secure the border and we should know who is coming into this country." (September 24, 2015 *The New York Times*)

In this quote Cruz sets up a dichotomy, based on rule of law, between migrants who should be "welcomed" and "celebrated" and those who should not. He leans heavily on legality and border security. He situates himself as "the son of a Cuban immigrant" and links it to his stance on immigration policy. As with other

Republican candidates, he attempts to create a distinction between what was routinely referred to as being “anti-immigration” and “anti-illegal immigration.” His family’s immigrant status assists him in this regard, as his family’s “insider status” preemptively nullifies the danger of being viewed as anti-immigrant.

“I know something about immigration,” Sanders told the audience here. “My dad came to this country from Poland at the age of 17 without a nickel in his pocket, without much of an education.” (July 13, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

Candidates, like Sanders in the quote above, also claimed their family’s proximity to immigration provided them with a depth of insight into the issue, which allowed them to speak with some level of authority on the topic of immigration. In the above quote, Sanders does not explain how this knowledge was transmitted from father to son, whether Sanders personally witnessed his father’s immigrant struggles or was informed of them. Instead, his father’s immigrant status is presented as automatically conferring some level of knowledge or insight into the immigrant experience.

Finally, for candidates whose spouses had immigrated to the United States, their relationships with their spouses were potential fodder to justify their positions on immigration policy and law. While candidates who drew on their family’s immigrant roots cast themselves as products *of* immigration, candidates who cited marital relationships were pointing to ties that were consciously formed. This served as both a potential advantage and a potential disadvantage at various points in the campaign.

"When I was 17 years old, I fell in love with Columba Garnica de Bush," [Bush] said, referring to his Mexican-born wife. "It's going to be really hard for me to get lectured to by anybody about the politics of immigration." (August 28, 2015 *The New York Times*)

While Bush did not himself make claims to an immigrant background, Bush positioned himself as personally knowledgeable about the ins and outs of immigration enforcement and immigrant life by virtue of his marriage. To an extent, however, Bush's citations of his marriage were part of a defensive strategy as his opponents—specifically, Trump—targeted Bush's marriage to delegitimize his immigration stance and make the argument that Bush was "weak" on immigration. Thus, Bush moved back and forth between consciously drawing himself closer to the Mexican immigrant population and defending his closeness. For Bush, a personalization narrative was not necessarily a net positive; while he could present himself as more knowledgeable, he had to counter accusations of bias. For example, in a July 7, 2015 article for the Wall Street Journal, it was stated that "Trump over the weekend posted a message from another user on his Twitter account charging that former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush 'has to like the Mexican illegals because of his wife,' Columba, who was born in Mexico."

Democratic candidate Jim Webb also made reference to his wife's former refugee status, citing her as an immigrant success story.

He notes that his wife is originally from Vietnam. "Her family escaped from Vietnam on a boat," Webb says. "She went to two refugee camps, she never spoke English in her home and she ended up ... graduating from Cornell Law School. ... That's the value that we have with a good immigration system." (October 13, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*)

Webb's characterization of his wife's life trajectory takes her from danger and disadvantage to scholastic success. In this quote, which is published snipped and shortened in the cited article, Webb appears to be suggesting that his wife's immigration to the United States ultimately provided added value to the country as a whole. By using his wife's immigrant story, Webb is able to put a personable face to an, at times, vilified category, while simultaneously asserting that allowing migrants or refugees like his wife to immigrate to the United States is a mutually beneficial arrangement between the immigrant and the state.

Distancing

Unlike personalizing, where candidates attempt to position themselves as *close to or personally affected by* issues surrounding immigration, when candidates employed distancing, the goal was not to create distance between themselves and immigration. Rather, candidates sought to distance themselves from the negative implications of using incendiary (often racialized) rhetoric. In so doing, candidates had to strike a careful balance between distancing themselves from the implications of their words without coming across as ambivalent. Distancing is a key strategy of color-blind racism, and involves the use of semantic moves such as the classic "I'm not racist, but..." (see Bonilla-Silva 2002; 2010). The use of the conjunction "but" features heavily in this discursive strategy, and often follows the formula: [disavowal of negative label/attribution], but [opinion or presumed statement of fact].

Trump: We can do a wall. We're going to have a big, fat beautiful door right in the middle of the wall. We're going to have people come in, but they're coming in legally. And Mexico's going to pay for the wall because Mexico — I love the Mexican people; I respect the Mexican leaders — but the leaders are much sharper, smarter and more cunning than our leaders. (October 28, 2015 University of Colorado in Boulder Debate, Republican Primaries)

In the midst of the public blowback to Trump's proposition of building a "big, beautiful" wall, Trump introduced the idea of including a "big, fat beautiful door right in the middle of the wall." Trump makes the case that he isn't anti-immigrant, he's just pro-"legal" immigrant. Throughout his campaign, Trump bounced back and forth between denigrating Mexican immigrants and offering tepid qualifiers that he wasn't referring to all Mexican immigrants, just the "bad dudes."

Trump employs the concept of "love" to both personalize his relationship with immigrants (see previous section) and to distance himself from the offensive implications of the rhetoric he directs at immigrants. Trump simultaneously asserts that he loves "Mexican people" and respects "Mexican leaders," and portrays them as conniving and duplicitous, out to pull one over on the naive, innocent American populace and inept American government. By stating that he loves and respects Mexican citizens and their government, Trump creates a space for himself where he can argue that he is not *denigrating* them, but rather grudgingly *admiring* them.

"I'm not going nativist, I'm pro-immigration," Mr. Walker said, according to Mr. Moore's account of the call to a reporter for The New York Times. (July 6, 2015 *The New York Times*)^{vi}

In the data collected for this dissertation, at least, candidates did not appear to think of themselves as at risk of being labeled "racist," as no candidate directly

disavowed the label. This in spite of the fact that a number of article writers did not mince words and at various points described Trump or his statements as racist. The label that candidates did seem to see a need to disavow or distance themselves from was “anti-immigrant/anti-immigration.” In the above secondhand quote, Walker reportedly disclaims the label “nativist,” and claims ownership over the label “pro-immigration⁸²,” while still towing the hardline immigration stance that the majority of the Republican candidates made part of their platform, with some variation between them. Articles in all three newspapers analyzed for this dissertation characterized the stances and or statements of one or more Republican candidates as “anti-immigration,” and it was this media characterization that candidates appeared to push back against. By labeling themselves as “pro-immigration,” candidates are able to shift the conversation from consequences of their policy stances to the *types* of immigrants that would be affected by their policies. Being “pro-immigration” or, specifically, “pro-legal immigration,” distances politicians from the implications of their own speech or policy stances by temporarily disaggregating the target of that speech and oversimplifying the impact of their proposed policies on the immigrant populace. The close linkage between legal status and criminality (see section *crime and criminals*, above) helps ensure that the audience associates unauthorized status with criminality. *The good ones* (“legal immigrants”) aren’t the intended target, *the bad ones* (“illegal immigrants,” criminals) are. Candidates selectively own or disown certain labels in an effort to

control the perception of their message and present themselves and their message in the best possible light, based on their target audience.

Trump: *[in response to a question regarding his comments on Bush speaking Spanish on the campaign trail]* We have a country where to assimilate you have to speak English. And I think that where he was and the way it came out didn't sound right to me. We have to have assimilation to have a country. We have to have assimilation. I'm not the first person to say this. ... This is a country where we speak ENGLISH, not Spanish. (September 16, 2015 CNN Reagan Library Debate, Republican Primaries)

Another distancing tactic is to argue that one's statements or ideas are not new. This allows the speaker to offload some of the responsibility for the reactions to and consequences of alienating rhetoric onto a third party. This third party can either be identified or, in the case of the quote above, left undefined. Trump states that he is "not the first person to say this" when arguing for assimilation criticizing Bush's use of Spanish in some of his campaign stops. While Trump chastises Bush in the above quote, the real targets are Bush's Spanish-speaking audience. Presumably, no one is under the impression that Bush, a native-born American, needs to "assimilate," and Bush demonstrated frequently in his campaign that he is fully capable of speaking English. There is nothing to suggest that Bush's audience could not understand English, but Trump appears to assume in the above quote that they could not. In taking exception to Bush's use of the Spanish language, Trump is essentially arguing that politicians should not speak Spanish to their (potential) constituents and that communicating in English is a nonnegotiable requirement for civic engagement.

In the next chapter, I will discuss in greater depth the ways in which presidential candidates in the 2016 election cycle contributed to the racialization of immigration.

In short, this was accomplished by the close association between immigration and Mexicans and Latinos. When presidential candidates “talk about” immigration, more often than not they were explicitly or implicitly evoking Mexican and Latino immigrants as both the targets of immigration legislation and the threats brought about by lax immigration enforcement. “Who” presidential candidates talked about in relation to immigration concerns did temporarily shift during the 2016 election; the role of contemporary events in the political discourse on immigration will also be addressed.

CHAPTER 4: Discursive Themes in Political Context

In the previous chapter, I examined some of the themes employed by presidential candidates in the 2016 election when they discussed or referenced U.S. immigrants and/or immigration law. In discussing the major themes *the border*, *crime and criminals*, and *family and community* and the minor themes of *weakness/strength*, *rationality/sanity/intelligence*, and *values*, I only briefly alluded to the idea that these themes were deployed unevenly across the immigrant population. When candidates talk about immigration, particularly *unauthorized* immigration, they do so with spoken or unspoken reference to specific subpopulations of U.S. immigrants. For example, not all immigrant subpopulations are equally likely to be characterized as criminals, and not all immigrant subpopulations are evoked when presidential candidates cite the perils of unauthorized immigration. To the extent that the selective reference and evocation of specific segments of the immigration population maps onto racial or pseudo-racial categories within the United States' racial system, presidential candidates contribute to the racialization of immigration in political discourse in the United States.

This chapter elaborates on the above points by examining how presidential candidates in the 2016 election discursively racialized the topic of immigration. The goals of this chapter are threefold: 1) to establish how select immigrant groups, specifically Mexican and Latino immigrants, are racialized through political discourse; 2) to establish how presidential candidates in the 2016 election contributed to the racialization of immigration; 3) to demonstrate the importance of context in understanding *who* politicians talk about when they talk about immigration, and *how* they talk about them,

with specific reference to the terrorist attacks that occurred in late 2015 in Paris, France and San Bernardino, California.

The chapter starts with a brief overview of racial formation theory and the concept of racialization. It then proceeds with a look into how Mexican and Latino immigrants are racialized through political discourse; in short, this is done by a two-fold process. First, monolithizing Mexican immigrants as a group and obfuscating both intragroup differences and intergroup differences between Mexican immigrants and other Latino immigrant groups. Second, certain immutable characteristics are tied to this group. These characteristics may not all be presented as biological imperatives, as is the case in classic biological racism, but they are effectively treated as resulting from an ahistorical, deterministic, group “culture” (see Romano 1973). Given the prominence of the crime and criminals theme amongst presidential candidates with hardline immigration stances, the role of criminalization and its close association with racialization will also be explored in this section. The chapter will then progress to a discussion of how immigration, as an ostensibly race-neutral topic, is effectively racialized in political discourse. In short, this is accomplished through the use of racialized immigrant groups as the principle objects within this discourse. While there were exceptions, for the majority of the data collection period, Mexican and Latino immigrants were portrayed by presidential candidates and the news media as the objects affected by immigration law. When presidential candidates discussed unauthorized immigration, they often did so with explicit or implicit reference to unauthorized Mexican and Latino immigrants in a way that effectively equated the part with the whole.

This chapter concludes with a look into how the political discourse on immigration shifts in response to current events, as a way of demonstrating the importance of context in the deployment of discursive themes, as well as its importance in determining which immigrant group is portrayed as the principle undocumented “threat.” In general, the conversation surrounding unauthorized immigration focused on the U.S.-Mexico border and Mexican and Latino immigrants, but in the latter part of 2015 the political conversation shifted its focus to the Syrian refugee crisis and the potential dangers of terrorists masquerading as refugees and entering the country. These fears were heightened as a result of the November 2015 attack in Paris, France and the December 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, which culminated in Trump’s declaration of a need for a “Muslim ban.”

RACIALIZATION AND RACIAL FORMATION

In the contemporary scholarly literature on racial inequality in the United States, it is not uncommon for scholars to employ the terms “racialize” and “racialization” to draw attention to the idea that race, rather than being a static, innate trait, is instead a process whereby “racial groups” are constructed as fundamentally different from one another, and persons are sorted into these groups on the basis of somewhat arbitrary qualifiers or disqualifiers. As a theory, racial formation attends to the creation, destruction, and alteration of racial categories within a society and to the ways in which social organization is informed by race (Omi and Winant 2002). When a group or social process is newly “racialized,” racial meaning is attached to it; this process of racialization is fundamentally ideological and arises within specific historical circumstances (Omi and

Winant 1986:64). Pseudo-racialization refers to instances where the racialization of a group or social process is incomplete or contradictory, such as when an ethnic group or religious affiliation takes on some of the characteristics of a racialized group. The process of racialization simultaneously creates “same” and “other” categories (Bonilla-Silva 2001:40); it is a process that is inherently *othering*. In the United States, this takes the shape of constructing a category that is viewed as fundamentally different from whiteness. As I will touch on again in the next section, Mexican Americans and Latinos occupy a nebulous position within the racial system in the United States. Being of Mexican or Latino descent, or claiming the label “Hispanic,” is variously treated as an ethnic group designation or a distinct racial group, but, as I will argue and many scholars have argued, these groupings have morphed into, at a minimum, pseudo-racial categories.

Racial projects are the ideological work hounds that link structure and representation. (Omi and Winant 2002). They are the means through which what would otherwise be “just words” shape the organization of a society and lead to material consequences for groups racialized as non-white in the United States. The discursive ties between immigrants and criminality (discussed in the next section) is not harmful just because it’s mean to call immigrants criminal; it is harmful because it can and does have an impact on policing, employment, and so on. The focus of this dissertation is on the racialization of immigration within political discourse, but discourse is not the level at which the consequences of this racialization is expected to reside and die. While all discourse can affect the shape of society and alter the positioning of persons within a society, political discourse is particularly impactful because it is created and utilized by key figures who

occupy a unique position (relative to the general populace) where they can affect structural change at local, state, and national levels. The United States' ever-evolving systems for immigration enforcement and inclusion/exclusion can be viewed as a "racial project" that determines not only who can enter but also how they are positioned and how they are viewed once here (see Province and Doty 2011). It is shaped in part by the political discourse on immigration, which in turn is shaped in part by the fears and anxieties of the nation toward racialized groups that are treated as posing unique economic and social threats.

While the terms "racialize" and "racialization" have become common place, race is still often *treated* as a inborn characteristic; this is particularly true in quantitative research where race is treated as a static, discrete variable (see Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi 2008; Zuberi 2001; see also Saperstein, Penner, and Light 2013). In practice, models that purport to demonstrate the effects of race are often accompanied by discussions and interpretations that largely ignore the embedded, processural nature of racial systems and racial groupings (Bonilla-Silva and Zuberi 2008). It is therefore important for scholars to examine how and in what ways groups and social processes become racialized and the ways that the discursive contributions of powerful societal figures contribute to and perpetuate that racialization. If immigration is racialized, then it is cannot be a neutral system because its costs and consequences are not evenly applied to all who fall under its jurisdiction. Instead, immigration enforcement and border control functions as a major site for the racial oppression of Mexicans and Latinos, among other targeted groups.

RACIALIZATION OF IMMIGRANT GROUPS

In order for immigration to be racialized, it must be linked to or associated with one or more racial groups that have formed within the United States' system of racial inequality. Racialization is an ongoing process rather than an end point, and the ways in which groups are racialized, along with which groups *are* racialized, changes over time and is heavily dependent on context and historical circumstances. All three racialized groups to appear in the data for this dissertation (Mexican and Latino immigrants, Muslims, and Asians) have previously undergone the initial racialization process and been incorporated, however awkwardly, into the United States' racial system. The purpose of this section is not to assert that presidential candidates in the 2016 campaign are responsible for freshly transforming collections of individuals into racialized groups via their discursive contributions. Rather, this section is intended to demonstrate the ways that presidential candidates drew on, maintained, and contributed to the racialization of these groups, and how presidential candidates racialized immigration through repeated direct and indirect references to these groups, thereby altering the image of "immigrants" in the abstract, and assumptions about *who* immigrates to the United States without authorization and *who* immigration law applies to.

Traditionally, race in the United States has been conceptualized in terms of a black/white binary (Hoschchild 2005). Scholars have struggled to position Mexican Americans and Latinos along this binary. Some scholars argue that the black/white binary has shifted into a black/non-black binary in the 21st century, with racialized groups like Asians and Latinos being partially absorbed into whiteness as a way to maintain white

supremacy (see Hoschchild 2005; Yancey 2003). Scholars have also argued over whether the categories of “Mexican American” and “Latino” should be folded into the racial system at all, with some scholars (see Almaguer 1987; Barrera 2008) asserting that Mexican Americans and Latinos are more accurately viewed as an ethnic or ethnicized group. In an applied sense, these arguments have merit; both in the self-definitions of Latinos and Mexican Americans and in the definitions imposed on individuals within these groups by outsiders, there are divergent opinions on whether being “Latino,” “Hispanic,” or “Mexican” automatically renders one unable to claim access to whiteness in the United States. These labels refer to one’s (or one’s family’s) country of origin. Because Mexico and other Latin American countries are not monoracial, some scholars argue that calling “Mexican American” or “Latino” a racial group is misleading.

The problem with this argument is that because racial systems arise within, and are dependent upon, a given society’s unique history, scholars need to view these labels in terms of how they are used within the United States and what role these labels fill within the United States’ system of racial inequality. These arguments break down in both applied and abstract scenarios when the use of these labels are assessed *in situ*. In an applied scenario, just because a person is considered white in their country of origin does not necessarily mean that he or she will be viewed as white within the United States. In the abstract, these US-grown labels evoke an image a “typical” Mexican American or Latino who possesses certain physical and cultural traits. Regardless of their original intent or purpose, these terms have attained at a minimum a *pseudo-racial* status, as evidenced by the fact that police departments, particularly those in border states, have

used the term “Mexican-looking” to justify targeting certain individuals or groups (see Aguirre 2004 for a discussion of the racial profiling of Mexican-origin persons).

When attempting to racially categorize someone, we look for racial markers to guide our interpretation of physical characteristics and our assessment of a person’s race can vary based on the presence or absence of these markers, like hairstyle and clothing (Saperstein, Penner, and Light 2013). The key features that mark an individual as “Mexican-looking” or as a Mexican immigrant include skin color and the use of the Spanish language, and these and other features become even more conspicuous in certain contexts (see Dick 2011; Ramos-Zayas 2004). “Mexican-looking” is not a term restricted to Mexican-origin persons and can be applied to individuals in other groups, Latino-origin or otherwise. “Mexican-looking” is one label used to designate individuals of a certain type of “brownness” that is conceptualized as inherently foreign to the United States, being essentially linked to a foreign country. To be “Mexican-looking” is to not look “American.” To that end, some scholars have argued that the principle defining racial binary in the United States is no longer white/black or black/non-black but instead American/alien (see Rivera 2014). Within this binary, to “look Mexican” (or Arab Muslim, or Asian) is to be placed in a racial category that precludes a person from being viewed as a full, legitimate, participant in U.S. society.

On the 2016 campaign trail, presidential candidates did not make reference to “Mexican-looking” individuals and did not explicitly engage in the *overt* racialization of Mexican Americans and Latinos. There was, however, one notable incident of a presidential candidate rejecting an essential feature of this type of brownness: Spanish.

Trump excoriated Bush for speaking Spanish on the campaign trail. He implored Jeb Bush to “really set the example by speaking English while in the United States” (September 16, 2015 The New York Times). Bush does not have Mexican ancestry, nor does he possess any features, outside his fluent Spanish, that would tie to him to this racialized group. What he does have is a wife who is a Mexican immigrant.

It is interesting to note that Trump did not, at least within the articles collected for this dissertation, criticize candidates Cruz and Rubio for speaking intermittent (Cruz) or fluent (Rubio) Spanish. It is possible that this was an intentional omission; Rubio and Cruz could both be described as “Latinos,” and to criticize their use of Spanish might have been received as overtly racist. Trump did not shy away from other statements that could, and often were, pegged as racist, however. For example, Trump once asserted that “Ted Cruz may not be a U.S. Citizen [...] He’s an anchor baby” (January 30, 2016). Thus, the absence of criticisms directed at Rubio and Cruz may have been incidental rather than intentional. Nonetheless, while Bush is not Mexican American or Latino, Trump’s criticism of his use of Spanish, suggesting that he is setting a bad example and asserting that in the United States “we speak English” (September 16, 2015 CNN Reagan Library Debate, Republican Primaries), advances an argument that speaking Spanish is incompatible with being a U.S. citizen.

Candidates also used Spanish in an apparent attempt to connect themselves with Mexican American and Latino voters. Bush rejected Trump’s criticisms of his use of Spanish by stating that “if a high school kid asks me a question in Spanish...I’m going to show respect and answer that question in Spanish” (September 17, 2015 Wall Street

Journal). Clinton punctuated her speeches with “basta!” when dressing down Trump and his immigration stance (July 14, 2015 Wall Street Journal), and Rubio on occasion spoke Spanish on the campaign trail and criticized Cruz’s inability to fluently speak the language (February 13, 2016 Wall Street Journal).

For Mexican Americans and Latinos, the process of racialization has at least partially elided distinctions between these two groups, as well as distinctions between immigrant and non-immigrant Mexican/Americans and Latinos. As a consequence, while there is a great deal of intragroup difference between Mexicans and other groups underneath the “Latino,” umbrella, and between immigrants and non-immigrants, in the political discourse on immigration these disparate entities are drawn together and treated as a singular group. During his campaign, Trump attempted on more than one occasion to deflect some of the criticism of his hardline immigration stance by making claims as to how “the Hispanics” or “the Latinos” felt about him, for example by stating that he had “fantastic relationships with the Hispanics” (October 26, 2015 Wall Street Journal) and “the Latino vote will be easy” (July 23, 2015 Los Angeles Times). While journalists poked fun at Trump for baldly referring to these groups as if they were monolithic entities, Trump’s linguistic treatment of these groups is the blunt edge of a widespread phenomenon. During the 2016 presidential campaign, coverage of the latest “Trumpism” on immigration typically focused at least partially on the impact his words would have on “Latino voters.” “Latino voters” were treated as a veritable special interest voting bloc by politicians and journalists alike. At least within the articles collected for this dissertation, this voting bloc was only ever discussed with reference to immigration/immigration

policy or a candidate's chances at securing their party's nomination and/or the presidency. In both cases, Latinos were treated as single-issue voters.

Part of the process of racialization involves imputing onto persons within groups certain group-linked traits. Embedded within the political discourse on immigration are certain assumptions about the behaviors, traits, and motives of the racialized groups that are associated with immigration. These assumptions are tied to specific racialized groups rather than being strictly a byproduct of these groups' association with immigration, and are a function of each group's unique history within the United States.

Three racialized groups appeared in the data for this dissertation: Latinos and Mexican/Mexican Americans, Muslims, and Asians. Of all three groups, Latinos and Mexican/Mexican Americans appeared most frequently in the political discourse on immigration. This group was cited explicitly and implicitly, using references to "the border," the Mexican government, the Spanish language, and so on. Due to their place of prominence, a significant chunk of the discursive space used to develop or advance assumptions about racialized groups was dedicated to this group. The most common assumptions were as follows: Latino and Mexican immigrants do not want to assimilate. They pose a threat to U.S. citizens as potential criminals. They have strong family and community ties. They want citizenship and low-wage jobs.

Muslim immigrants were the second most commonly cited group, but the focus for this group was much narrower; Muslim immigrants appeared in the discourse where the political discourse on immigration and the political discourse on national security overlapped, specifically when the topic was terrorism. For this reason, the principle

assumption for this group to come out of the data was that Muslim immigrants are potential terrorists.

Asians briefly appeared during the brief media and political focus on birthright citizenship and the use of the term “anchor babies” by presidential candidates. The principle assumptions attached to this group is that, like Mexican and Latino immigrants, they want citizenship, and, further, they want to exploit the United States’ birthright citizenship. As a consequence, their quest for (and theoretical attainment of) citizenship for either themselves or their children was presented as something that wasn’t properly earned. These assumptions are evident in the dominant and minor themes discussed in chapter three, and will be expanded upon here.

For Republican candidates in particular, Latino and Mexican immigrants were held up as a potential source of cultural disruptions. While only a handful of candidates took that idea to the extreme, like former Louisiana Governor and Republican candidate Bobby Jindal when he stated that “immigration without assimilation is invasion” (August 21, 2015 The New York Times), the assumption that Latino and Mexican immigrants will not and do not want to assimilate surfaced regularly, such as when Trump asserted that Bush should “really set the example by speaking English while in the United States” (September 16, 2015 The New York Times). Spanish was held up as a disruptive force that threatened the United States’ status as an English-speaking nation, and Mexican and Latino immigrants are viewed as the carriers of this disruptive force. If they refuse to learn English, they are a threat to U.S. society. Mexican and Latino immigrants are assumed to bring with them their “cultural baggage,” which they can at least theoretically

“shed” but are reluctant to do so. This ties into the good/bad immigrant dichotomy discussed in chapter three; good immigrants assimilate and strive to become as “American” as possible, while bad immigrants do not embrace American culture and instead hold onto elements of their culture of origin.

Much ado was made over the potential crimes that could be committed by unauthorized immigrants during the 2016 campaign, but the relatively broad topic of immigration and crime was framed in a way that made it appear as though Mexican and Latino immigrants (out of all immigrant groups) posed the greatest threat to public safety. In an era of “color-blind” racism, crime discourse can and is mobilized to evoke fears of certain racialized groups without the explicit mention of race (Davis 1997). Racialization and criminalization are mutually reinforcing processes (Province and Doty 2011). Specifically with respect to Mexican and Latino immigrants, these processes feed into each other by designating, through media and political discourse, Mexican and Latino immigrants as particularly inclined toward criminality. The physical traits that are associated with Mexican and Latino immigrants operate as markers that can isolate and identify potential criminal threats; these markers take on added import because of the perceived consequences that are attached to the failure to identify Mexican and Latino immigrants. *If* Mexican and Latino immigrants are more likely to commit crime *then* not identifying them is a risk to oneself and one’s community. Immigration enforcement institutionalizes these anxieties (Province and Doty 2011). As discussed previously in this section, racial profiling is premised on the belief that there are physical traits that mark Mexican and Latino immigrants as different and visibly identifiable.

Although political and media discourse often take care to distinguish between the threat posed by unauthorized immigrants versus the harmlessness of “good” immigrants who came to the United States “the right way,” there are no physical cues that distinguish between those Mexican and Latino immigrants who came to the United States “the right way” and those that did not. Racial profiling rests on two assumptions that are required in order for it to be an effective tool for immigration enforcement: first, that all Mexican and Latino-looking persons are or can be reasonably assumed to be unauthorized immigrants until proven otherwise, and second, that the unauthorized immigrant community in the United States can be effectively culled by targeting Mexican and Latino-looking persons. These twin assumptions legitimate and institutionalize the links between Mexican and Latino-looking persons and unauthorized immigration.

During the 2016 campaign, Trump used the shooting death of Kathryn Steinle as evidence of the dangers posed by Mexican immigrants. Steinle was shot to death in San Francisco by an unauthorized immigrant from Mexico who had been previously deported to Mexico five times, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that there was no known link between Steinle and the shooter, and Steinle’s death was characterized as senseless and random. Trump characterized it similarly by calling it a “senseless and totally preventable violent act committed by an illegal immigrant” (July 6, 2015 *Wall Street Journal*). He went on to use Steinle’s death as evidence for the need for heightened border security, stating that her death was “yet another example of why we must secure our border immediately” (October 20, 2015 *The New York Times*). For Trump, Steinle’s shooting death, which occurred not long after

Trump's formal entry into the presidential race, was useful for advancing Trump's narrative that Mexico sends criminals across the border. Although Trump was perhaps the loudest voice to use Steinle's death to support his message, he was not the only politician to do so; a number of Trump's fellow republicans used Steinle's death to target so-called "sanctuary cities" like San Francisco.

Steinle's death was the most notable example of a presidential candidate using an actual crime to advance his or her immigration stance. Despite the heightened danger allegedly posed by out-of-control unauthorized immigration, there were no other incidents of crimes committed by unauthorized immigrants that garnered widespread news media and political attention during the data collection period. By and large, the criminalization of immigrants took place implicitly through the use of certain phrases—such as "illegal aliens"—and explicitly through the use of generic references to immigrant criminality. Trump's initial rapists-and-criminals statement was often referenced in news articles on Trump and immigration or Trump's immigration policy. This sound bite was used to provide a quick-and-dirty context within which to assess Trump's later statements and actions in articles with limited print space, such as in the following examples:

"In June, Trump launched his campaign calling Mexicans "rapists" and labeled people in the U.S. illegally as criminals, and he has maintained a hard stance against illegal immigration." (October 20, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*)

"[...]yet he began his campaign by promising to build a wall along the border with Mexico to block out the people Mexico is "sending" to the United States, claiming: "They're bringing crime. They're rapists." (June 11, 2016 *The New York Times*)

Of all candidates, Trump leaned the heaviest on explicit references to immigrant criminality in justifying his hardline stance on immigration and his proposal to build a physical border wall. In addition to his memorable announcement speech, Trump was also quoted as saying that “there is a great danger with illegals” (July 23, 2015 Los Angeles Times) and, according to a second-hand account, made reference to “‘rough dudes’ that join street gangs and commit murder” (September 29, 2015 The New York Times). As noted previously, other than Steinle’s death, Trump relied on generic examples and, on occasion, rhetorical questions to strengthen the connection between unauthorized immigration and criminality without the burden of having to provide evidence for his assertion. Rhetorical questions in particular are effective for boomeranging the issue back on the listener, as in the following quote:

“Do you think there’s tremendous cost for the illegals that are in here right now?” Mr. Trump asked. “Do you think there’s tremendous crime being committed by illegals?” (August 16, 2015 *The New York Times*)

By framing the question in terms of what the listener “thinks,” Trump safeguards the original claim that there is a “tremendous cost” to unauthorized immigration as well as “tremendous crime” being committed by unauthorized immigrants. If the listener says no, they aren’t rejecting the claim so much as they are asserting that that is not what they “think,” leaving it open to the possibility that the problem lies with the listener’s perception, not the original claim.

Excluding Trump and the frequent media references to his announcement speech, the implicit evocation of immigrant criminality was more common. Republican candidates favored the phrases “illegal immigrant,” “illegal alien,” and “illegals,” in descending

order of popularity (Democratic candidates tended to refer to “undocumented immigrants,” if they distinguished between unauthorized and authorized immigrants at all). The label “illegals,” while the least popular out of the three, is the term that most closely weds unauthorized immigration with inherent criminality, reducing an entire class of people to their perceived offense. Supporters of the term (and “illegal alien”), may be quick to point out that the term references their immigration offense and is therefore fitting and not an inappropriate mislabel. However, in the handful of times the term “illegals” appeared in the data, it was *only* used in conjunction with the assertion that unauthorized immigrants commit or run the risk of committing crimes, or the broader assertion that unauthorized immigrants are a social hazard.

Despite the rhetoric, the belief that immigrants commit more crime is not borne out in the literature (see Hagan and Palloni 1999). In general, high immigration does not lead to an increase in crime and in some contexts actually serves a protective function against crime (Lee and Martinez 2009). While there is evidence to suggest that first generation children of immigrants are more likely than their parents to commit crimes (Mears 2001), the findings in general indicate the perceived link between immigration and crime has little basis in fact.

The criminalization of unauthorized entry, along with repeated appearances of the “criminal immigrant” in the news media and political speech, tightly ties crime and immigration discourses together (Flores 2003). The lawlessness and criminality of unauthorized immigrants legitimates restrictive border practices and policies (Demo 2005; see also Zatz and Smith 2012) and potentially alienates immigrant communities

from the protective functions of local police (Zatz and Smith 2012). It potentially has an impact on public sentiment regarding immigrant groups, and can lead to feelings of hostility. Racial hostilities do not always manifest as overt aggression, they can also manifest as indifference, such as that directed at immigrants unable to access emergency services due to fear of deportation (Provine and Doty 2011).

The only exception to the discursive linkages between crime and Mexican/Latino immigrants in particular was when candidates specifically discussed terrorism; when terrorism was the topic of conversation, political focus shifted to Muslim immigrants, and even the image of *who* was coming across the U.S.-Mexico border was altered as concerns over border insecurity homed in on the hypothetical scenario of a future terrorist taking advantage of the presumed lack of security at the border.

Regarding Muslim immigrants, the dominant assumption was largely split along party lines, with Republicans advancing the assumption that Muslim immigrants are threats to national security as potential terrorists and Democrats advancing the assumption that the Muslim immigrant group (Syrian refugees) that was the focus of immigrant discourse in the latter part of 2015 consisted of innocent refugees seeking to escape conflict. For the most part, Muslim immigrants as a group only appeared where political discourse on immigration overlapped with the political discourse on national security and terrorism, and the assumptions attached to this group are bound up within the principle assumption that Muslim immigrants are *potential terrorists* or *innocent and wrongfully discriminated against*. As with Mexicans and Latinos, there is not a scholarly consensus on whether or not Muslims can appropriately be considered a racialized group in the United States.

Islam is a religion, not a race. Nonetheless, it is associated with a particular part of the world, and in the abstract, the term “Muslim” carries with it notions of brownness (see Rivera 2014). At a minimum, Muslims can be viewed as a pseudo-racialized group, where the extent to which they’re viewed as a racialized group or a religious group varies with context.

The political discourse on immigration bears the marks of the instability of this racialization. When the political discourse on immigration shifted in focus to the Syrian refugee crisis in late 2015, Republican candidates Bush and Cruz advocated for Christian Syrians to be treated as less threatening than Muslim Syrians. For example, Cruz stated that there is “no meaningful risk of Christians committing acts of terror” (November 16, 2015 Wall Street Journal) and Bush argued that “we should focus our efforts as it relates to the refugees for the Christians that are being slaughtered” (November 17, 2015 Los Angeles Times). For some Republican candidates, then, religion either creates a threat or neutralizes and negates a threat. There is not enough development on these ideas in the data to conclude if Christian and Muslim Syrians are seen as fundamentally the same (excepting their religion and perceived threat level) or whether the dichotomy that these candidates are drawing on further divides these two groups along racialized lines. To the extent this good/bad refugee binary appears in the political discourse on immigration, the primary distinguisher between these two groups is based on religion rather than racial categorization.

Both Democratic and Republican candidates discussed “citizenship” as the second of two levels in how to “deal with” unauthorized immigrants currently residing in the

United States. On the first level was the issue of whether or not unauthorized immigrants should be deported, and on what grounds they should be deported. The second level focused on whether or not unauthorized immigrants should be allowed to traverse a “pathway to citizenship.” In general, Democratic candidates were in favor of a pathway to citizenship, while Republican candidates were opposed. Citizenship also surfaced within the context of an immigrant’s motive for coming into the United States or for having a child within the United States; this motive was attributed to both Latinos and Asians.

As a group, Asians appeared only sparingly in the 2016 presidential campaign discourse. The only notable appearance within the data was during a brief flurry of media attention over the use of the term “anchor baby.” During the 2016 campaign, birthright citizenship briefly became a media focal point when Bush made a statement about “birth tourism” and employed the pejorative “anchor babies” in reference to pregnant women from other countries coming to the United States to give birth and secure birthright citizenship for their child. After receiving some backlash, Bush clarified that “Frankly, it’s more related to Asian people” (August 28, 2015 *The New York Times*). *The New York Times* broke down the use of the term “anchor babies” by Republican candidates as follows:

The term, when used by Donald Trump, among others, refers to any American child of an unauthorized immigrant, even an immigrant who has been present in the country for many years. But Mr. Bush used it to talk about the much narrower phenomenon of birth tourism: when foreign nationals travel here temporarily to give birth to children, without any immediate intention of taking up residence. (August 28, 2015)

This breakdown by *The New York Times* indicates an implicit hierarchy of offense. The last clause of the first sentence (“even an immigrant who has been present in the country for many years”) suggests that Trump’s use of the term “anchor babies” is too expansive and imputes onto all foreign women who give birth in the United States an intentionality that may not be there. In the first scenario, giving birth for at least some of these women is unintentional, or at least not motivated by a desire to create an “anchor.” In the second scenario, the sole reason for these women to come to the United States is to take advantage of the United States’ *jus soli* birthright citizenship.

Within the political discourse on immigration, the first scenario is regularly attributed to Mexican and Latino immigrants, while the second scenario is attributed to Asian visitors. Asians do not appear as immigrants within the data for this dissertation, but rather as foreign nationals. This appearance is bound up within a larger debate about immigration and birthright citizenship, but the group itself is cast as a remote, foreign entity whose members want only to take advantage of U.S. law. Because Asians only appeared in this narrow window where the use of the term “anchor baby” was dissected by the media, it is not possible to determine any other assumptions tied to this racialized group using these data. However, it is telling that when Asians do appear within the political discourse on immigration they are cast as exploiters of the U.S. legal system who reside almost entirely outside that legal system. Whether good, bad, or toxic for the community, both Republican and Democratic candidates concede that Latino and Mexican immigrants occupy a space within U.S. society; this is not so for Asians during the group’s brief appearance in the data.

RACIALIZATION OF IMMIGRATION

In the previous section, I discussed the racialization or pseudo-racialization of groups that were commonly referenced by presidential candidates. The goal in this prior section was not to argue that presidential candidates in the 2016 election constructed three new racialized groups, but rather to discuss how presidential candidates drew on the existing racialization of these groups, and how their discursive contributions help to perpetuate the notion that Mexicans/Latinos, Muslims, and Asians constitute three cohesive and readily identifiable racial groups. Due to the greater focus on Mexican and Latino immigrants, more discursive space was dedicated to this group; nonetheless, during their brief appearances in the data, the tropes that were advanced concerning Muslims and Asians were consistent with prior studies that have examined the racialization of these two groups (see Dunn, Klocker, and Salabay 2007; Garner and Selod 2014; Volpp 2001).

In this section, I will piggyback off the discussion on the racialization of Mexicans and Latinos to examine how immigration, as an ostensibly race-neutral topic, is effectively racialized in political discourse. By “race-neutral,” I do not mean to imply that immigration in the United States does not have a lengthy history of racial exclusion. Instead, I am arguing that a system of metered inclusion and exclusion does not have to be built on racial logics, although in the United States, in practice, it very much is. Further, the terms “immigrant” and “immigration” do not *inherently* imply a particular race or ethnicity, and there are immigrants in the United States who span the racial gamut. The term “immigrant” in the United States meaningfully conveys the idea that a person lived in one country, and now lives in the United States, and this holds true when

applied across racial lines. Likewise, “immigration” expresses the process of movement from one country to another, and its denotation is not tied to specific countries of origin.

It is possible, however, that as a label, “immigrant” is not equally applied to all immigrants. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to answer the question of whether some immigrants are more likely to be called “immigrants” on the basis of racial categorization or country of origin, but it is a research question that could provide evidence for or against the argument that immigration is racialized. If only *some* immigrants are commonly viewed and/or labeled in public discourse as immigrants, while other immigrants are given different labels (“British ex-pat”) and their immigration to the United States given an alternative narrative (“Tom *moved here* from England”), and if those trends map onto racial categories or countries of origin, that would further indicate that immigration is racialized.

The argument that immigration is racially neutral appears to be the principle line of defense for politicians and general proponents of restrictionist immigration policy: it isn’t racist because it applies to everyone who would want to come to the United States equally. This argument underlays the common protestation of immigration restrictionists that they aren’t anti-immigrant, they’re “anti-illegal immigration.” Similarly, immigration restrictionists advance a narrative of entitlement and exceptionalism to explain why unauthorized immigration is wrong; they state that it isn’t “fair” for unauthorized immigrants to circumvent the rules, which should apply to everyone equally. These statements surfaced in the 2016 presidential election and are common tactics employed by immigration restrictionists in the political discourse on immigration more broadly.

These arguments, in addition to misunderstanding the processes involved in the United States' immigration system, along with social and global forces that disadvantage the "Global South," ignores the fact that restrictionist policies are driven by racial logics and gain support due to racial anxieties.

De-contextualized, the terms "immigrant" and "immigration" may be race-neutral, but that changes when they are utilized within specific contexts. Within the political discourse on immigration especially, the term evokes the image of a non-white "other." Immigration is racialized in political discourse through the use of racialized immigrant groups as the principle objects within this discourse. Politicians speak of "immigration reform," a broken "immigration system," and out-of-control, criminal "immigrants," but when these statements are examined below their race-neutral veneer, it quickly becomes apparent that only certain racialized groups function as the inspiration and intended target of these policies. This statement held true for all candidates in the 2016 election, regardless of political affiliation.

In the United States, the racialized groups with the closest discursive ties to immigration are Mexican Americans and Latinos. This is evidenced within the data collected for this dissertation through the fact that these groups are the default referents when immigration is discussed. This changes when additional salient contextual concerns are addressed. Thus, discussions of immigration, without reference to other current events, tend to focus on the U.S-Mexico border and Mexican/Latino immigrations, while discussions of immigration with reference to terrorism focus on Muslim immigrants.

When talking about immigration, presidential candidates frequently talked about “immigrants” or “immigration” in a way that was superficially non-specific, with no explicit reference to specific immigrant groups, but would do such in a way that indicated their statements were framed by an assumption that “immigration = Mexican/Latino immigration.” References to “the border” were almost exclusively about the U.S.-Mexico border, but candidates often did not *explicitly* identify the U.S-Mexico border in their speech. Instead, candidates often slipped back and forth between talking about immigrants and immigration, and talking about “the border.” For example, Kasich, in discussing the impracticality of massive deportation of unauthorized immigrants, stated that “[...]you can’t pick them up and ship them across the border[...]

 (November 11, 2016 The New York Times). In the political discourse on immigration, the phrase “the border” is interchangeable with the U.S.-Mexico border, and references to the U.S.-Canada border were nearly nonexistent during the data collection period. Indeed, candidates ran the risk of being mocked if they directed their attention northward; when Walker briefly argued for the need to have a wall along the U.S-Canada border, his proposal “drew ridicule” (September 21, 2015 Los Angeles Times).

Although the phrase “the border” recurred frequently over the course of the campaign, candidates did at times employ the plural “borders.” Trump argued over the course of his campaign that “we don’t have borders right now” (January 22, 2016 Los Angeles Times) and on his campaign website, a position paper asserted that “a nation without borders is not a nation” (August 16, 2015 The New York Times), but in terms of actions and proposals, candidates fixated on the U.S-Mexican border. Candidates

discussed their plans to fortify the U.S.-Mexico border, and made stops in southern border states to discuss immigration and meet with Border Patrol agents. The notable exception to this focus was during the late part of 2015 when Trump advocated a “Muslim ban” and effectively argued for the need to guard against this impending threat at every entry point into the United States. It is an exception that proves the rule; the focus of candidates’ attentions, whether narrow (U.S.-Mexico border) or generalized (all immigration to the United States by Muslims) is determined by the perceived position of the racialized threat.

Candidates also demonstrated the assumption that immigration and Mexican/Latino immigration were equivalent ideas by targeting specific voting blocs to disseminate their message regarding their stance on immigration. For Democratic candidates, who dedicated only a negligible amount of time to border talk, *who* they targeted their message toward and *who* they spoke to about immigration was the principle way in which they strengthened the association between immigration and Mexicans/Latinos. *The New York Times* describes a political ad for Hillary Clinton that includes a young girl expressing her fears that her parents would be deported. In the ad, Clinton calls the girl over to her and has her sit in her lap, where she comforts the young girl by telling her to let her (Clinton) do all the worrying because she’s working hard to make sure that the girl’s parents won’t be deported (February 18, 2016). In Texas, Clinton attended a session with the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, where she actively courted Latino voters, making statements like “I love being called ‘La Hillary,’[...]I want you to know I am not just La Hillary, I am also Tu Hillary.” She condemned Trump’s statements on

immigration and Mexican immigrants, and asserted that for her “this is personal” (October 15, 2015 *Los Angeles Times*). Clinton’s campaign stops also included a meeting in Manhattan with the Service Employees International Union, where many of the members are immigrants. The article detailing this meeting didn’t specifically mention a particular race or ethnic group, but it did conclude with a pseudo-catchphrase used by Clinton as a shorthand response to Trump’s divisive and derisive rhetoric: “Basta! (Enough!)” (April 13, 2016 *The New York Times*).

As previously discussed, the Spanish language is one of the traits associated with Mexicans and Latinos, and both Democratic and Republican candidates strategically used Spanish to signal a willingness to communicate with the Latino “voting bloc.” Additionally, speaking Spanish perhaps signals that these candidates “understand” this voting bloc and these voters, in a literal sense (understanding Spanish), which lends the impression that they likewise “understand” their needs and concerns.

The final section of this chapter attends to the ways in which the political discourse on immigration can shift in response to contemporary, newsworthy events by examining what happened to the political discourse on immigration in the late part of 2015. The political discourse on immigration extends backward in time to the beginnings of the United States, and many of the tropes used in targeting immigrants or specific immigrant groups have a lengthy discursive history, even in instances where the targets have changed. Nonetheless, the “national conversation” about immigration is highly vulnerable to current events, and which immigrant groups are focused on, what the

attached fears regarding those groups are, and how politicians and the media talk about them can change in a relatively short period of time.

THE MUSLIM BAN AND THE SHIFTING FOCUS OF THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON IMMIGRATION

The political discourse on immigration evolves over time rather than being created anew with each new generation of politicians. The ways in which politicians talk about immigration, the concerns that surface, and the tropes attributes to Mexican and Latino immigrants all have deep roots in the United States' immigration history, and all can be partially attributed to multiple factors: geography, the United States as a "nation of immigrants," the U.S. political structure, global patterns of poverty, and the U.S. economy to name but a few. While the way politicians talk about immigrants and approach immigration is not wholly new, neither is it stable, as it evolves from the interplay between *history* and *context*.

In previous chapters I have briefly drawn attention to the history of immigration in the United States. In this section I wish to draw attention to the importance of context in the political discourse on immigration by discussing a notable instance during the 2016 presidential election when candidates' attentions were drawn away from their normal targets and talking points to focus on a supposed new threat: Muslim terrorists sneaking into the country by pretending to be legitimate refugees from Syria. While the immigrant Muslim terrorist was not an entirely novel concept at the time, as advocates of stronger border enforcement have long argued that terrorists could sneak into the United States via its porous borders, the *pretend Syrian refugee* was a new slant on an enduring trope, one

that is attached almost exclusively to Muslim immigrants. The political discourse on immigration and the political discourse on national security already shared some degree of overlap, but the discursive turn away from Mexican/Latino immigrants and toward Muslim immigrants and Syrian refugees drew these two discourse subsets even closer as candidates insistently tied immigration concerns to national security concerns and vice versa.

The general sequence of events went thus:

During the month of November, the media attention on immigration and the election broadened to include the dilemma of Syrian refugees, where they would go, what countries would take them, and the responses of state politicians to federal decisions regarding placement. Prior to November 2015, the term “refugee” did not appear in any news articles that were selected as relevant to the dissertation based on previously outlined criteria. Halfway through the month of November, that changed (specifically: November 10th in *the Wall Street Journal* and the *Los Angeles Times* and November 13th in *The New York Times*). These dates roughly coincide, or slightly predate, the terrorist attacks in Paris, France on November 13, 2015 that served as a catalyst for greater media and political attention to terrorism and Syrian refugees, as a narrative began to unfold that ISIS fighters could be exploiting the refugee crisis to cross borders into Europe.

In addition to state politicians weighing in with their responses to the real or hypothetical possibility of Syrian refugees being resettled in their states, presidential candidates also responded. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that “[Ben] Carson urged congressional leaders to cut any federal aid that could help resettle Syrian refugees in the

U.S” (November 16, 2015) and that “[Donald] has said he would block Syrian refugees from coming to the U. S. and force those already in the country to leave” (November 23, 2015). In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Rubio phrased his concerns as such: “You allow 10,000 in; 9,999 of them are innocent people fleeing oppression, and one of them is a well-trained ISIS fighter. You’ve got a huge problem on your hands” (November 23, 2015). Huckabee asserted (wrongly) that “only 1 out of 5 of the so- called ‘Syrian refugees’ who went into Europe were actually Syrian” (November 10, 2015 Los Angeles Times).

Cruz came out strongly against the proposition to bring Syrian refugees to the United States, saying “who in their right mind would want to bring over tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, when we cannot determine, when the administration cannot determine, who is and isn’t a terrorist?” (November 16, 2015 The New York Times). With no hard numbers to go by on how pervasive the threat of ISIS infiltrators was, politicians relied on hypothetical numbers and emphasized the danger of the unknown, framing the acceptance of Syrian refugees almost as a game of Russian roulette.

In December, the focus on Muslim immigrants as terrorists threats escalated further after the attack in San Bernardino, California on December 2nd. The Syrian refugee crisis continued to be a topic of conversation, but in the aftermath of the San Bernardino attack, which did not involve immigrants who came into the United States as refugees, the focus broadened and a critical eye was turned on all Muslim immigration. This broader focus is largely attributable to Trump, who wrested control of the national conversation when his campaign issued a statement that “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete

shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on" (December 8, 2015 *The New York Times*). This extreme proposal, coupled with a colloquial characterization of the state of the country's political representatives, simultaneously presents an image of an out-of-control crisis and advances an equally extreme solution as the only logical response to that crisis. If a country's leadership is running around in utter befuddlement, then it follows that the only immediate solution is to lock things down to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. Throughout his campaign, Trump's popularity was based in part on the image he crafted of an outsider, free thinker, and free speaker. The bald delivery style of Trump's official statement calling for a Muslim ban is very much in keeping with that image.

The majority of the December coverage of the "immigration debate" following Trump's statement calling for a Muslim ban focused on Trump's stance, his statement, and reactions to his stance and statement by other politicians, presidential candidates, and community representatives. Mexicans and Latinos had all but disappeared from the conversation.

For example, in the December articles from *The New York Times* that were collected for this dissertation, the word "Mexican" appeared in only 5 out of 35 articles. Of those 5 appearances, 3 consisted of the then-routine reference to Trump's announcement speech for context (for example: "Donald J. Trump, a leading Republican presidential contender, has called Mexican immigrants rapists and drug dealers" [December 24, 2015]), 1 was from a quote by Democratic candidate Sanders who was comparing Trump's more recent statements on Muslims to his past statements on Mexicans, and 1 was in an article where

the author criticized Trump's divisive rhetoric. "Latino" only appeared once, in reference to Rubio's failure "to defend Latinos more robustly from Mr. Trump's attacks" (December 16, 2015). References to the undocumented appeared in 3 articles and "illegal immigration" (or a close variant, such as "immigrated illegally") appeared 4 times, and were the only references that generally were in keeping with the immigration narrative that Republicans had adhered closely to up until mid-November. Finally, the two articles that included the phrase "Hispanic" characterized this group as a voting bloc with an interest in immigration policy. By contrast, "Muslim" appeared in 26 out of 35 articles and "refugee" appeared in 11 out of 35 articles.

In January, the media and the presidential candidates were still talking about Muslim immigrants and Trump's Muslim ban, but Mexican/Latino immigrants, unauthorized immigration, and the U.S-Mexico border were slowly reincorporated into the political discourse. In the *Wall Street Journal's* January coverage, 19 out of the 44 analyzed articles included the word "Muslim" and only 3 articles made reference to refugees. Five articles referenced "Mexico," 4 articles referenced Mexicans, 0 referenced Latinos, 4 referenced Hispanics, 4 referenced the undocumented. Twenty-six articles referenced "illegal" immigration or a close variant.

By February, the focus had largely shifted back to Mexican/Latino unauthorized immigration and the U.S-Mexico border. Only 4 out of 49 articles in the *Los Angeles Times* mentioned Muslims, and they were not an outlier; 6 out of 38 articles from the *Wall Street Journal* and 5 out of 51 articles from *The New York Times* include the word "Muslim." Four out of 51 articles at *The New York Times*, 0 out of 38 articles at the *Wall*

Street Journal, and 1 out of 49 articles at the *Los Angeles Times* included the word “refugee.”

It should be stressed once more that these numbers reflect articles that were pulled for analysis for this dissertation, not all articles that were published by the three journals for the month of February. In order to be pulled for analysis, articles needed to 1) include one or more key terms (immigration; Mexican; refugee; etc) and include one or more presidential candidates discussing immigration or an immigration-linked political issue. It is not possible to conclude from these numbers drawn from these articles, then, that *all* media attention, or even all attention in these three journals, rapidly deescalated by February. What is possible to conclude is that with respect to the presidential race, what was disseminated to a national audience regarding the immigration stance of presidential candidates, what was “talked about” on a national stage with regard to immigration, swerved hard toward Muslim immigrants and refugees in the latter part of 2015 before boomeranging back by February. This demonstrates two things: 1) how the political discourse on immigration is vulnerable to or affected by national and international events and tragedies, and 2) in the contemporary political discourse on immigration in the United States, Mexican/Latino (unauthorized) immigrants operate as the default “bogeyman” that politicians point to when they need to stoke the populace’s fears that immigration is out of control. This bogeyman is not a new creation, but rather a legacy character whose roots date back, at a minimum, to the early 20th century (see Flores 2003).

CHAPTER 5: Concluding Remarks

On November 8th, 2016, Donald Trump was elected 45th president of the United States. This dissertation is not a treatise on the racism inherent within Donald Trump's campaign, instead it is an examination of the contributions to the political discourse on immigration by all Republican and Democratic presidential candidates who vied for their party's nomination and then the presidency. However, it would be disingenuous and inaccurate to present all campaign contributions to the discourse as equal. All campaigns were not given equal attention by the news media, and from his entry into the race in June of 2015, Donald Trump functioned as a touchstone for other presidential candidates, both Democrat and Republican, and his—or his campaign's—words were frequently employed to contextualize the statements of other presidential candidates, situating those statements within an immigration debate that was framed by the news media as being largely driven by Trump. In this concluding chapter, I explore the ramifications of Trump's larger-than-life campaign and the role his campaign played in the narrative of the immigration debate that was proffered by the news media. I discuss the potential implications of Trump's inflammatory rhetoric, which can be seen as being legitimized in light of his election to the highest political office in the United States.

Underlying my dissertation is my goal to ground this discussion in the political-historical context in which the data used for this dissertation are embedded. Often, Trump and his campaign were framed as revolutionary and novel; his election was a shock to many Americans. Nonetheless, Trump did not arise from the ether; the rhetorical tools utilized by his campaign are, at most, barely reforged iterations of what has come before.

Flashier in some respects, due to his bald language and apparent disregard of dog-whistle signifiers, but not new. What made the 2016 presidential election fertile grounds for study was Trump's entry into the race and his disregard for typical "political speech," but what makes this dissertation significant is the fact that it illustrates that despite Trump's reputation as a renegade, his discursive contributions are just the rough outer edge of the same political discourse that other presidential candidates drew from and contributed to. Further, his election win demonstrates that his bald rhetoric had popular appeal.

In chapter three, I discussed the major findings of the discourse analysis conducted for this dissertation. Three dominant themes emerged from the data: *the border*; *crime and criminals*; and *family and community*. These three themes were not the only themes to surface during the analysis, but they were the most prominent. Of the three, *family and community* was the least popular; the thematic prominence of *the border* and *crime and criminals* is likely due in part to the data collection period, which took place during the Republican primaries while the Democratic field was considerably smaller with Clinton the favored frontrunner, and in part due to the news media's hyperfocus on Donald Trump. *Family and community* was a common theme for Democratic candidates and certain Republican candidates who sought to humanize the targets of the immigration debate, and this theme was deployed as the primary counter-theme to *crime and criminals*, which was favored heavily by immigration restrictionists. *The border* and *crime and criminals* were thematically linked and often co-occurred; if this had not been true prior to Trump's entry into the race, it was certainly afterward, as Trump's assertion that Mexico sends rapists and criminals across the border proved to be

one of the more enduring comments that he would make, even against a long list of viable contenders.

Minor themes that surfaced in the data include *values*, *weakness and strength*, and *common sense, sanity, and intelligence*. These minor themes appeared alongside the dominant themes, and took the form of argumentative appeals to message recipients. For example, a particular stance or way of talking about immigrants was presented as being concordant or discordant with a given value set, such as *American values*, and this concordance or discordance was tied to a candidate's suitability or unsuitability for the presidency. Chapter three ends with a look into several discursive strategies employed by candidates: personalizing, distancing, and the construction of a good/bad migrant binary. Candidates personalized their message in an effort to paint themselves as sensitized to the struggles facing immigrants through their family history. On the flip side, candidates attempted to distance themselves from their statements, presumably to preempt being branded with negative labels such as "anti-immigrant" or "racist." Finally, candidates participated in the construction of a good/bad migrant binary. This binary construction is a crucial tool, particularly for candidates with a hardline immigration stance, because it enables candidates to reconcile their stance with the American mythos that the United States is a "nation of immigrants." By rank-ordering and designating some immigrants as "good" and some immigrants as "bad," candidates can then assert that any restrictionist policies or deportation initiatives that they design or support are intended to target the "bad" immigrants only. What constitutes a "good" and a "bad" immigrant differs from candidate to candidate, but these constructions appear to fall along party lines.

In chapter four, I discussed how candidates in the 2016 presidential election contributed to the racialization of immigration, an ostensibly (but not historically) racially neutral process of metered access. The racialization of immigration takes place via a strong association between immigration and immigrants as a whole and particular racialized groups; as a consequence, the terms “immigrant” and “immigration,” sans qualifiers, produces an abstract image of a “brown” body with certain characteristics and identifying features. Much of the political discourse on immigration draws on an unspoken understanding of “who” immigrants are and where they come from. If this were not the case, statements such as “immigrants are flooding across the border” and “immigrants should learn to speak English” would necessitate qualifying remarks in order for them to make sense. Instead, these statements make sense “on their face” because of the strong association between immigration and racialized bodies, in particular, Mexicans and Latinos.

Three racialized or pseudo-racialized groups appeared in the political discourse on immigration that was captured for this dissertation: Mexicans and Latinos, Asians, and Muslims. The latter two groups were evoked only within specific contexts. Asian foreign visitors appeared in the political discourse on immigration during the brief media flurry over Bush’s use of the term “anchor baby.” Muslims became the partial focus of the political discourse on immigration during the late part of 2015 as a result of media attention on the plight of Syrian refugees, which was shortly followed by two terrorist attacks in Paris, France and San Bernardino, California. Outside of these contexts, media

and political focus was almost exclusively directed at Mexican and Latino immigrants and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Presidential candidates drew on tropes associated with these three groups without outright denigrating these groups as a whole. Instead, they played a game of immigrant exceptionalism wherein they attempted to distinguish between “good” and “bad” group members. This is perhaps best exemplified by Trump, who, after claiming that Mexico sends criminals and rapists to the United States, tacked on at the end of his statement that “some, [he assumes], are good people.” “Good” immigrants are those that attempt to assimilate into Anglo culture, “bad” immigrants do not. Speaking Spanish is treated as evidence of refusal to assimilate, and even non-immigrants, like Jeb Bush, risk being publicly chastised for speaking Spanish and “setting a bad example.”

On the whole, it is no longer socially acceptable to publicly make overtly racist remarks. Racial ideology in the United States has seen a shift toward “color-blindness” where racial issues are interpreted and articulated using frames that obscure the persistence of racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2010). How we “talk about” race in the public sphere has seen a shift away from explicit references to racist ideologies and toward implicit evocations via oblique references to “culture” and “poverty” (see Bonilla-Silva 2002; 2010). Racially-coded language has become more figurative and less literal. It is no longer socially acceptable to call racialized minority groups “dirty,” for example, but it is possible to refer to groups in ways that insinuate an ontological uncleanness and disorderliness (Kil 2014). Stating outright that one thinks that Mexican Americans are “dumb” and generally lacking in intelligence would likely be frowned upon, but social

researchers of the past have had no qualms with using a cultural deficit model and attributing the lackluster educational attainment of Mexican American children to their parents' failings and the trappings of "Mexican culture" (see Aguirre and Hernandez 1995; Romano 1973; Vaca 1970).

The history of political discourse on immigration in the United States is one of recirculated and repurposed tropes, metaphors, and strategies. The targets shift over time and in response to historical events and global circumstances, but the large border between the United States and Mexico, combined with immigrant trends and economic conditions, has ensured that much of the focus has been on movement across the United States' southern border. Mexicans and Latinos have been the recurring targets of anti-immigrant rhetoric and legislation. In the mid-1990s, California Proposition 187 was a ballot initiative, approved by voters but later deemed unconstitutional, that attempted to restrict immigrants' access to educational and emergency health services (Kil 2014). In recent years, Arizona's SB 1070 garnered attention after it was signed into law; this bill would have given Arizona police the authority to determine the immigration status of those they stopped in the event that there was "reasonable suspicion" that the person being stopped was undocumented (Nill 2011:38). What constitutes reasonable suspicion is ill-defined, but discourse analyses of racial profiling have demonstrated that spatial boundaries function in place of overtly racial narratives in justifying why and how certain individuals are profiled (Glover 2007). Rather than stating outright that a person was profiled for being Mexican or Latino, it is her "out of place"-ness (Glover 2007:239) that purportedly makes her a target. Anti-immigrant rhetoric casts Mexicans and Latinos as

perpetual outsiders, and this outsider status is not restricted to unauthorized immigrants or legal Mexican and Latino immigrants; all Mexicans and Latinos risk being seen as “out of place” if they possess or exhibit certain markers. Speaking Spanish functions as one such marker of foreignness and illegality (Dick 2011; Hill 2001).

Much of the bill was ultimately struck down, but the anti-Latino and anti-Mexican rhetoric that was employed by supporters of the bill has led to an increase in “Hispanophobia” (Nill 2011). The tight discursive connections between immigration, unauthorized immigration, crime, and Mexicans and Latinos ensure that any attempt to negatively characterize unauthorized immigrants has potential negative consequences for Mexicans and Latinos. Short of seeing someone’s legal documentation, immigration status cannot be ascertained via visual or auditory cues. Accents, speaking Spanish, and “looking Mexican” are things that can be seen or heard, and it is these features which police officers must rely on prior to making any demands to see a person’s legal documentation. Mexicans and Latinos are perpetually *at risk* of being pegged as foreigners in a way that Anglo Americans are not.

What gives political discourse power over the lives of racialized minority groups is the way it is incorporated into micro-level interactions, which in turn form the structures that shape lives and affect destinies. There is no direct translation from discourse to political structure: words must be translated into action, legislation must be voted on, policies must be carried and enforced. Political discourse is mediated through receivers; members of society hear or read what politicians and media voices say, they process it using an interpretive system that is partly informed by society and partly

unique, based on one's own history, personality, and mental state, and this processed information in turn influences their opinions and their actions. Antipathy toward Latinos and Mexican Americans does not always translate to overt acts and expressions of racism; antipathy can manifest as apathy in the face of injustice (see Provine and Doty 2011). Even if only a minority of the U.S. populace could be characterized as overtly hostile toward Latinos and Mexican Americans, the apathy engendered by the political discourse on immigration softens the likelihood of political resistance to anti-immigrant legislation. If the conceit that unauthorized immigrants are a societal hazard is accepted, and if the racialization of immigration in has discursively transformed Mexican Americans and Latinos into potential unauthorized immigrants, then the targeting of Mexican Americans and Latinos in immigration enforcement and the uneven consequences foisted upon these groups by such enforcement are naturalized as acceptable losses in an imperfect system designed to safeguard the masses. Civil rights are in danger of being cast to the wayside in the furor over the perceived threat of unauthorized immigration (Nill 2011).

This dissertation looks at only one piece of the puzzle: the U.S. political discourse on immigration as it exists in the societal troposphere. It does not attend to the on-the-ground reception of political discourse (the interpretation phase) nor does it attend directly to the ways it informs political action (the implementation phase). This point cannot be stressed enough; racial systems are fundamentally *material* systems that hierarchically arrange racialized groups in ways that provide or constrain access to material rewards (see Bonilla-Silva 2001). Ideology is a component of this racial system,

but it does not encapsulate the system, and there is a danger, when focusing exclusively on discourse, of losing sight of the material consequences and manifestations of racism. Therefore, what politicians say, looked at on its own, tells us only part of the story; we then need to look at what they do and how what they do is informed by discourse. Political discourse is particularly useful in this regard, because politicians are part of a class of key societal figures who can translate sentiment into structure. A full examination of how the political discourse on immigration in the 2016 election translated into structural change is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, I will briefly discuss the pathways from political discourse to political action, using President Trump's partial first year in office.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, Trump made three main campaign promises on immigration that received widespread media attention: deport all unauthorized immigrants, build a wall, and ban all Muslim immigration. As of this writing, Trump has not attempted to advance any initiatives intended to remove all unauthorized immigrants from the United States in one fell swoop. However, there have been observable changes when looking at specific deportation populations, as well as administrative arrests. Removals during the 2017 fiscal year were actually down when compared to the 2016 fiscal year, but when looking specifically at deportations of immigrants living in the United States—versus all removals, including those who were turned back at the border—deportations were higher during the 2017 fiscal year than in the 2015 and 2016 fiscal years. Administrative arrests—arrests for civil violations of

immigration laws—were much higher in the 2017 fiscal year compared to the two prior fiscal years (Valverde 2017)

A not-uncommon response to Trump's incendiary campaign rhetoric was that he was simply saying whatever he thought would get him elected, with no intention of follow through. Through his abortive attempts to enact restrictions against Muslim immigrants coming into the United States and his fledgling attempts to get the ball rolling on the massive construction project that would be building a wall along the entire U.S.-Mexico border, Trump has since illustrated the intention behind the intonation. Trump did not invent the ways that immigrants are constructed in public and political discourse; he did not wholly manufacture the connection between immigrants and crime. He drew on the constructions that already existed to build a case as to why he should be elected president, and as president, he is drawing from that same body of discourse to justify the political actions he wishes to take, although the *way* he and his administration draws from that discourse has changed slightly, as will be discussed shortly.

Less Trump-specific examples of the connection between discourse and action would be the legislative attempts to ban sanctuary cities that followed the shooting death of Kathryn Steinle, who was killed by a man who had been deported to Mexico multiple times (see chapters 3 and 4). Trump was directly involved in the use of Steinle's death to perpetuate the discursive connections between Mexico and crime and undocumented immigration and criminality, but he was not directly involved in translating rhetoric into political action beyond tying Steinle's death into a larger argument for the need to build a border wall. Nonetheless, a number of state and federal politicians did attempt to take the

narrative of Steinle's death at the hands of an unauthorized immigrant and parlay it into direct action. Using a well-publicized crime or tragedy to press for anti-immigrant legislation is a well-worn tactic, one that was also employed to justify the need for Arizona's SB 1070. Whether or not these political actions were justified, the discourse surrounding Steinle's death, and the ways in which her death was taken up and used by members of the Republican party, demonstrates the connections between discourse and action, both directly, in attempts to ban sanctuary cities after her death, and indirectly, by shaping what society sees as the most pressing concerns or public threats. Because Trump ultimately won the presidential election, we are able to see the intent that underpinned his discursive contributions, but even if Trump had not won the election, his contributions doubtless would have continued to influence the landscape of immigration legislation in the United States.

It remains to be seen whether the way Trump spoke about immigration on the campaign trail heralded a shift in what is considered appropriate "political speech." As President of the United States, Trump vacillates between his bald, "maverick" communication style and a more polished delivery with a tempered message. Memorably, Trump wrestled with his own administration on what to call his executive order that would temporarily restrict travel from a number of Muslim-majority countries. While then-Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly contested that it was a ban and insisted instead that it was a "temporary pause," and then-Press Secretary Sean Spicer claimed that Trump's use of the word "ban" was simply because that was what the media called it, Trump tweeted emphatically and in-caps that "I am calling it what we need and what it

is, a TRAVEL BAN!” (Stevenson 2017). Trump and his administration have struggled post-election to find a message style that “plays well” to the American people. During his campaign, Trump’s message was intentionally raw and he presented himself as an outsider willing to “drain the Washington swamp.” His supporters were a self-selecting group, and it did not matter if some voters took offense or fell away as a result of what he said; it only mattered that he maintain enough supporters to gain enough votes in the Electoral College. Now Trump must address a captive audience, many of whom he alienated and disregarded as inconsequential during his campaign. To date, Trump’s administration has followed a general pattern of announcing an executive order or policy stance using relatively moderate language; if support for Trump’s plan of action flounders or never materializes, Trump turns renegade and returns to the maverick style that characterized his campaign. This departure often takes place on Twitter, where presumably Trump feels he can directly address the nation without mediators or moderators to water his message down.

What has occurred in this era of Trump has not been a radical upset in political discourse so much as it has been a one-man war against discursive forces that are relatively stable and resistant to sudden change. In this “post-racial” era, color-blindness (see Bonilla-Silva 2010) and dog whistle politics (see Haney Lopez 2013) reign as a means to signal one’s subscription to a certain type of ideology without saying anything that would be deemed too “disruptive.” The message matters less than the way in which it is delivered. The media homed in on the question of whether or not Trump’s “Muslim ban” fit the definition of a ban. In addition to being a ridiculous question, as the lineage

from Trump's proclamation of the need for a "total shutdown" of Muslim immigration to his executive order was clear, it directed nearly all attention to Trump's intentions, with little time or space left over to examine the impending consequences for travelers from the targeted nations. Even if it could have been conclusively stated that Trump's executive order wasn't *intended* as a ban for Muslim visitors, neither its consequences nor its targets would have been altered unless the executive order itself had been. A similar statement could be made regarding Trump's incendiary rhetoric more broadly; Trump commandeered the bulk of the media's attention during the Republican primaries. His statements about Mexico, Mexican immigrants, and Muslims led to a great deal of media handwringing and navel gazing, while the hardline immigration stances of his Republican competitors did not warrant anything near the same level of attention. Cruz's statement that a religious litmus test should be used for refugees and that only Syrian Christians should be allowed into the United States was merely a blip on the radar; it did not dog his footsteps in the same way that Trump's "rapists and criminals" comments dogged his.

The findings in this dissertation have both political and sociological implications that should be considered in full. These findings contribute to the body of evidence that the political discourse on immigration and border security does not target all immigrant groups equally. This is not a novel idea to social research and cultural criticism, but the tactic of referring to "immigrants" in the abstract, of maintaining that the system is fair and applies equally to everyone persists. The conflation of Mexican and Latino immigrants with immigrants as a whole, and Mexican and Latino immigrants with

Mexican and Latino non-immigrants ensures that not only will legislation and initiatives targeting immigrants disproportionately target Mexican and Latino immigrants, but also Mexican and Latino non-immigrants. This is perhaps most readily evident in the use of racial profiling by border patrol officers and the attempted codification of racial profiling for suspected unauthorized immigrants by police officers in Arizona's SB 1070 (see Aguirre 2004). Traits that become associated with Mexicans and Latinos, such as speaking Spanish, "brown" skin, and so on, become markers of foreignness or out-of-placeness (Glover 2007), and non-immigrants as well as immigrants risk having their positions in society destabilized, either temporarily (stopped by a police officer) or long term (wrongful deportation). This is a risk that Mexicans and Latinos are disproportionately forced to carry on their shoulders, one that prevents Mexican and Latino citizens from being seen as full and valid members of American society (see Dick 2011; Goldsmith et al 2009; Ramos-Zayas 2004).

Sociologically, this dissertation furnishes evidence for the racialization of immigration in U.S. political discourse by using a contemporary national campaign where immigration was a foregrounded topic. Much of the literature on the political discourse on immigration consists of a backwards look at legislation that was selected for its racially charged nature; while this sort of literature helps illustrate how racialized groups such as Latinos and Mexicans are targeted by and framed within anti-immigrant discourse, the selection process leaves open the question of whether or not these pieces of legislation are "blips on the radar" or a compartmentalized discourse that does not represent the political discourse on immigration more broadly. Strung together and

examined with an eye toward the history of immigration legislation and anti-Latino and anti-Mexican racism, it is clear that California Proposition 187 and Arizona's SB 1070 are not mere "blips," but, taken in isolation, these studies generally cannot attest to whether or not these pieces of legislation and their attendant campaigns are the work of a vocal but persistent minority of political elites.

This dissertation takes a broad if shallow look at the upper crust of the United States' political elites: the 2016 presidential candidates. While anyone can enter the presidential race, only a select few are viable contenders for the Republican and Democratic nominations. The media coverage of Republican and Democratic candidates was not evenly distributed across all candidates; it was heavily slanted toward Trump, particularly when immigration was the topic of discussion. Even so, to the extent that they appeared in the media coverage, the ways in which they talked about immigration did not appear to diverge dramatically from other candidates who received more coverage. Trump gained notoriety during the campaign for his uncultured, bombastic way of delivering his opinions, but his treatment of Mexicans, Latinos, and Muslims was just the leading edge of a sub-body of the political discourse on immigration that all Republican candidates worked within to some extent. As characterized by Republican candidates, the damage done by unauthorized immigration, the threats posed by undocumented immigrants, the key characteristics of "good" immigrants, and the unacceptability of "amnesty" as a solution to the large numbers of undocumented immigrants residing in the United States all converge to present an image of the undocumented immigrant that is a hazard to the United States and its citizenry. While

Republican candidates did vary in how extreme or hardline their immigration stance was, candidates who appeared too “soft” or sympathetic received pushback from their fellow Republicans.

The genesis of this dissertation likewise acts as a testament to the argument that the racialization of immigration and the tropes used to target Mexicans and Latinos, Muslims, and (to the extent they appeared in the data) Asians. Although immigration was a foregrounded topic in the presidential race following Trump’s entry into the race, the original framework for this dissertation was conceived during the early stages of the campaign, and the data were collected over the course of the campaign, rather than after the fact. Thus, while I knew in advance that immigration was *likely* to be an enduring topic in the presidential race, I did not know just how much so, nor did I know that Trump, who was initially seen as an outlier candidate with no real chance at the Republican nomination let alone the presidency, would eventually win the election. Because of this, the findings in this dissertation cannot be assumed to be an artifact of researcher selection bias.

Moving forward, researchers interested in carrying this work forward will doubtless find many prime opportunities for research into the political discourse on immigration during the Trump presidency. Of particular interest would be a longer term examination of whether or not Trump’s back-to-basics style of speech will exert a significant and lingering effect on the discourse as a whole. What we have witnessed so far is an attempt by other members of his administration and Republican legislators to re-stabilize the discourse by repackaging Trump’s proposals and initiatives using more

palpable, color-blind language, such as Trump's "Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." We have also seen a rejection of Trump's language by other segments of society. Portions of Trump's executive order attempting to block the entry of Muslims into the United States were blocked by multiple federal judges, and Trump's own words during the campaign were used as justification. When the administration attempted to argue that in order for the courts to determine that Trump was specifically targeting Muslim visitors they would have to penetrate his "veiled psyche," Judge Watson of Hawaii argued that "[f]or instance, there is nothing 'veiled' about this press release," Judge Watson wrote, quoting a Trump campaign document titled 'Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States'" (Burns 2017).

What is sorely needed is a greater focus on the reception and interpretation phases of the political discourse on immigration. This dissertation only covers political discourse as it is produced and repurposed, and from that, using previous research on the racialization of Mexicans and Latinos and the effects of discourse on a populace, it can be argued that political discourse does have an impact on how Mexicans and Latinos are popularly viewed within society. It can further be tentatively inferred how the political discourse on immigration may affect how these groups are viewed, but in the relative absence of studies that directly examine how the political discourse on immigration is received and interpreted, a space for contestation remains. In other words, it remains to be firmly established the extent to which the political discourse on immigration affects how the American populace view immigrants and racialized groups discursively tagged

as immigrant groups (Mexicans and Mexican Americans, Asians and Asian Americans, and so on). Previous research on news framing has indicated that while the type of frame used to discuss an issue can cause slight shifts in attitudes, individual schemas moderate these effects (Shen 2004). Rather than an overt, one-to-one correlation between the messages present in news media and the political attitudes of those that consume that media, news media appears to exert an influence by priming consumers to use certain attitudes when making political judgments (Althaus and Kim 2006). The effects of political discourse is likely subtle on an individual level, and these effects are moderated by group exposure and life experience.

Finally, this dissertation focuses on elite discourse by examining the discursive contributions of presidential candidates, as filtered through news media coverage, but future research should also examine the penetration and success of resistance narratives. Resistance narratives were not covered in this dissertation because the focus was solely on statements made by presidential candidates and their proxies, but in hindsight it would have been possible to include voices of resistance. One of the more common article structures encountered in the data for this dissertation was the quote-counter quote, where the words of a candidate (typically, Trump) were juxtaposed against those of a community or organizational representative. These resistance and community-driven counter-narratives warrant greater attention. In particular, future research could examine how and to what extent these narratives are drawn into elite discourse. The political discourse on immigration in the 2016 presidential campaign was heavily skewed toward Republican voices, at least as captured by the data for this dissertation. When Democratic

candidates did make an appearance, their discursive contributions were, at a cursory glance, more likely to be concordant with the narratives advanced by community representatives. It would be interesting to see to what extent Democratic talking points mirror those found in resistance narratives and, further, to what extent resistant narratives are tweaked or altered when drawn into elite discourse.

Immigration will continue to be a heated topic for debate in the United States, and over the next four years we may witness a shift in how racialized immigrant groups are talked about, with a baldness that eschews the *du jour* colorblind racism that has reigned in the public sphere since the latter half of the twentieth century. Or perhaps Trump's popularity is merely a blip and the political discourse on immigration will stabilize; in the shift from Trump-the-campaigner to Trump-the-president, we have seen this battle between the bald and the buttressed play out, often on Twitter. Whichever occurs, it is important to keep in mind that while Trump differs in style, his substance did not deviate wildly from that of his opponents or from the Republican party more broadly.

Presidential candidates fell along an axis from humanistic to restrictionist, and while these terms are not connotative opposites, they are positioned as opposing ends in the political discourse on immigration. Candidates like Bush who attempted to object to the harsh characterization of Mexican and Latino immigrants were portrayed by their fellow candidates as being weak-willed on the topic of immigration. The more a candidate considered the potential ramifications of legislation for immigrants, the less "hardline" he or she would be seen as.

Whatever shifts might take place in the *way* messages are conveyed, what is inevitable for the foreseeable future is that racialized groups will continue to be the targets of this discourse, and as a result will suffer a host of consequences from destabilized citizenship to racial profiling to deportation. The more typical colorblind racism that pervades the political discourse on immigration is not “better,” or “nicer”; if anything, it is more insidious. As researchers we must continue to demonstrate, systematically and extensively, that the U.S. immigration system is not a neutral force, from inception to implementation. This dissertation only addresses one piece of the puzzle, a pre-inception that focuses on elite political figures vying for the top political position in the country. Presidential candidates drawn on and contribute to a body of discourse that informs legislative and executive action and legitimizes it. Only one of the candidates discussed here won the election, but the discursive contributions of the others, Clinton, Cruz, Bush, and the rest, helped to sustain a particular way of looking at immigration, through a racial lens.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ For example, there is a documented history of public schools in the first half of the twentieth century labeling children of Mexican descent “non-white,” see *Mendez v. Westminster*.

ⁱⁱ The terms “unauthorized immigrant” and “undocumented immigrant” will be used interchangeably.

ⁱⁱⁱ See, for example, “Why They Love Trump: He’s Not a Politician” (<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/election-us-2016-36493676/why-they-love-trump-he-s-not-a-politician>)

^{iv} For more on discursive analysis, see Herrera and Braumoeller; van Dijk 1997

^v It is important to emphasize that for the primary data source (newspaper articles), the presentation of quotes is determined by persons other than the candidate (for example, the article writer or the editor). This includes the length of the quote (and the extent to which it is chopped up or presented whole) unless the statement is presented in full. Determining how to present a quote and how much to present is one of the principle ways that newspapers mediate the contributions candidates make to the political discourse on immigration.

^{vi} This quote is of questionable veracity. The article in which it was quoted states that Moore later stated that he had “misspoke.” Nonetheless, the quote was attributed to Walker and entered public discourse through the same channels as other quotes in the dataset.

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APPENDIX A

MONTH	NYT	WSJ	LAT	TOTAL
July 2015	43	63	37	143
August 2015	45	40	38	123
September 2015	34	26	30	90
October 2015	11	17	19	47
November 2015	42	33	36	111
December 2015	35	42	58	135
January 2016	50	44	34	128
February 2016	51	38	49	138
March 2016	28	38	32	98
April 2016	21	19	31	71
May 2016	28	30	30	88
June 2016	45	37	32	114
TOTAL	433	427	426	1286

Breakdown of articles analyzed per month and per newspaper. Entire articles were not analyzed, only the sections that pertained to the research topic. Some articles were initially selected using the outlined search process but were discarded as part of a manual review of topic relevance. Only articles that were deemed relevant to the research topic are counted here. Article count includes articles that contained direct quotes and articles that included indirect quotes and summaries of candidate positions on immigration and related topics.